

HISTORY WORKSHOP

a journal of socialist
historians

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Contact: Judith Hunt, National Womens Officer, Amalgamated Union of
Engineering Workers, Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section,
Onslow Hall, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey.



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Spare Rib is produced collectively by Rose Ades, Annie Brackx, Alison Fell, Marion Fudger, Victoria Green, Sue Hobbs, Wisty Hoyland, Susan Lambert, Laura Margolis, Jill Nicholls, Rosie Parker, Linda Phillips, Jane Prince, Marsha Rowe, Ann Scott, Eleanor Stephens.

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Pseuds corner

Dear *Spare Rib*.*

Griselda Pollock's article on *Jaws* was surely styled after *Private Eye*'s Pseuds Corner, being more of an insight into her own inflated and sex-obsessed psyche rather than an objective review and analysis.

Incidentally, my girlfriend fell asleep during a major proportion of the film, was horrified by Quint dragging his fingernails down the blackboard, but remained unimpressed by the rest. I sat on the edge of my seat, not through fears of being castrated, but because I find the sight of people being chomped by big sharks for dinner elicits a great deal of alarm and fear. But then again I saw a film and not symbolic feminist propaganda.

Stick to the concrete issues, don't prostitute your magazine to ego-trippers of any description (like me?).

Regards
Harry Pattinson
Birmingham

Dear *Spare Rib*.*

I was well into the second half of Griselda Pollock's *Jaws* review in *SR45* before realisation dawned. It wasn't a piss-take — it really set itself up to be taken seriously.

Surely by printing this self-indulgent flight of fancy — an even more tortuous and tenuous attempt than usual to apply the old over-worked phallus/envy/castration theme to just about anything it'll stretch to these days — you are contributing to a sizeable dent in the credibility of the women's movement.

Ms Pollock is fully entitled to her psycho-sexual interpretations but to devote so much space to them in what was otherwise an excellent issue is surely to both invite and to risk alienating a large percentage of your readership.

Yours sincerely
Maria Middleton
London WC1

Son of Jaws

Dear *Spare Rib*.*

The review of *Jaws* has provided me with an excellent handle on my own experience of the film which remained an annoying brew of uncertain doubts and suspicions ever since I saw it. I've read various accounts of sharks, their habits, the occasions and incidence of their 'attacks' upon humans. But none of this material enabled me to explain the long queues, tee shirts, knee socks, and the less clearly commercial phenomena, avid discussions in coffee-breaks, buses and railway compartments.

Obviously the confines of a short article do not permit Ms Pollock to state in full the caution and care with which the 'psychological' approach must be treated to avoid conclusions which, though personally valid, are socially erroneous. A major problem with conscious statements of the sub-conscious (e.g. "shark's jaws are vaginas with teeth") is the strong air of insanity that they exude. What actually happens in the film

is perhaps less important than the fact that I 'saw' the events take place quite differently from the female reviewer. Obviously my version is in keeping with the sexist undercurrent of the film and could well have been a subconscious elaboration of the events in the heat of the direct confrontation of the lone male and the maliciously threatening female/shark.

Through all my conscious efforts to be a properly equal person and a determinedly non-sexist male I would not have suspected the power of the non-conscious to sway me towards the maintenance of a male-centred society if I had not read Ms Pollock's review.

Yours sincerely
Stephen Cobb
Sussex University
Brighton

Battered wife

Dear *Spare Rib*.*

I found a copy of *Spare Rib* 37 in our common room at work, and not having heard of it before, I started to glance through it. I must say I found it very readable.

However, what prompted me to write is a letter entitled 'Beaten up' by Jane. I too have been a battered wife, and for seven years endured it. I could do nothing but endure it because the social services would not help (I had three children), the police told me I should take out a summons for assault, but can you imagine what it would be like to take out a summons against a bully and then have to share his bed — so that was that. CAB are a dead loss. And like Jane, in desperation, I went to see a solicitor. He took great delight in telling me I did not look as though I had been beaten up. I must say that at the time I could hardly breathe or laugh, because my chest was very painful. But he did let slip that the only evidence he could act on, or that the courts would accept, would be a doctor's. You see, if Jane had gone to her doctor's office and complained about her husband, not only will the doctor give her tablets to calm her down and treat her for her bruises, but more important, the doctor can tell the court how distressed Jane was, and what effect her husband's cruelty was having on Jane and her children. Armed with the doctor's evidence no solicitor or court will refuse to take her seriously. It worked in my case. I hope it works for Jane, as being beaten is not very nice.

Joyce
Sanderstead
Surrey

C(male)HE

Dear Sisters,

After reading newspaper articles about the Campaign for Homosexual Equality which manage to ignore women, I wondered if the movement should be re-named Campaign for MALE Homosexual Equality.

I went to a CHE meeting recently and half the male members

didn't even bother to turn up because a so-called 'women's issue' was being discussed. CHE must lose a lot of support by this sort of thing.

Marlene Lowe
Brighton

PS: I know they lost two potential male members that evening over this sexist attitude.

Gay worker

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I was very interested in the report of the Gay Workers Conference. Having lost two jobs, having been discovered and consequently being unemployed for two years, it was a pleasure to read about a lesbian saying people should talk about their situations. I've had a gut-full of personal and deep pain in jobs where I honestly could not believe people, especially other women, could be so vindictive and cruel.

I understand feminist politics quite well but I too am sick of hearing about ideology rather than real individual people with their own experiences. Often to relate back to one's own reactions, difficulties and experiences is painful but talking it out with others instead of being one step removed and detached by referring to 'our collective oppression' is much better and more supportive. I have worked in the gay movement for a few years now but still experience a personal crisis every time I apply for a job. A crisis between honesty and integrity and, for once, wanting to live on a decent wage instead of social security.

With love
Hilary Stafford
Kirby in Ashfield
Notts

A Harangue on Left Groups

Dear *Spare Rib*,

Having been active in the Abortion Campaign, I was rather put out by your article on the National Conference in London (*Spare Rib* 42). Whilst I agree with the view that far too little time was devoted to discussion and the Action proposals, and the lack of organisation in the conference, however, I would disagree strongly with the harangue on the 'left groups' and on the specific part some of them (not all) have played in building the NAC.

Firstly, the orientation to the labour movement largely argued by the left has paid off, eg the TUC and Labour Party resolutions passed on 'Free Abortion on Request'. Is this not a significant victory for women? It is necessary now to force them to implement these resolutions.

Furthermore NAC did not grow out of ALRA, rather it was created specifically because ALRA with its pressurising MPs and petitioning line was felt to be an inadequate strategy.

The NAC, as far as I have seen, is an alliance of women's lib, IMG, CP, Labour Party and many other independents, and in most localities (at least in Scotland) its strength has not been 'consistently feminist', although the tone

of the article is that it should be, ie relying on the small forces (unfortunately) of the women's movement.

It is unfortunate (although perhaps understandable up to now) that there still is this distrust and sectarian approach to the left by feminists, when we all should be helping build a mass campaign to gain 'Free Abortion on Demand' as an integral part of the struggle for women's liberation.

Yours in sisterhood
Janice Little
Aberdeen

Start at the grass roots

Dear *Spare Rib*,

As an avid reader of *Spare Rib* I would like to get a few points over about the whole of the women's movement, including all the fragmented groups within it. I am a working class woman and member of Big Flame. Every time I go to meetings called by different groups I come out feeling bewildered most of the time.

I always hesitate about bringing ordinary women along because I really feel that the meetings are too intellectual, and too far removed from the ordinary woman in the street.

I am not saying that they are not sincere and work very hard in what they are doing, but I feel as if they are channelling all their energies into the wrong pattern.

Of course, abortion on demand and fights for equal pay and nursery facilities are vitally important, but how can all these things come about unless all women are politically involved, what with all the cuts by the Government which will make these things impossible. With one and a quarter million people out of work (mainly men) the brunt falls on ordinary women in the street hassling to feed, cloth, pay the rent, gas and electricity bills, the never-ending drudgery to make ends meet. One of the main reasons why I joined Big Flame is that they work within close contact and see the struggles of women on the bottom end of the scale. We need all the help we can get from all women in the struggle to live.

As far as I am concerned most of the women in all the women's movements are way ahead in the "liberation stakes" so let's turn around and start at the grass roots where women really do need liberating.

Yours in sisterhood
Agnes Thompson
Liverpool 5

PS: Another thing I was absolutely flabbergasted over the cost of hiring the Polytec (£1,000?) for the women's conference on April 25. Surely in this day and age, facilities for women holding these meetings should be provided with free halls — we pay for them through our taxes, don't we — they belong to all of us.

True self-knowledge

Dear *Spare Rib*,

As a new reader of your magazine I am dismayed to find that you,

or at least some of your contributors, link women's liberation with left wing politics. Surely what women need is freedom — and that means freedom from all political creeds whether left or right.

It seems to me that, at the moment, women's liberation in the most essential matters should be the aim of all women. Are those with right wing views to be excluded from this movement towards freedom?

I am surely not alone in fearing left wing socialist or state control as much as capitalist or male domination. Should we not begin by encouraging women to seek self-knowledge. Everyone seems so anxious to better the world for others and improve them. If only women centered their attention on gaining true self-knowledge it would make it so much more difficult for anyone to exploit them and all communal attention could be centered on getting restrictive laws changed so that women really could be free to choose their own destiny.

With best wishes for the future of the magazine,
Lorna Walker
London N8

Fighting the Cuts Dear *Spare Rib*,

Jill Nicholls' item in April's *Spare Rib*, 'Women against the Cuts', gives a far too negative impression of the Working Women's Charter Campaign.

We submitted papers to the Conference which dealt with ways the cuts could be harmful to the public (as "consumers" of the Social Services) and a contribution by one of our members drew attention to the problems faced by one-parent families (including deserted and battered wives) and even mentioned the need to fund Women's Aid refuges, which Ms Nicholls complains was overlooked. Those specially concerned with Women's Aid are welcome to support the Working Women's Charter and the Campaign Against the Cuts to present their point of view.

Moreover, at the Conference itself there was a report by Dr Berry Beaumont of Abortion, and speakers active in the nursery campaign also addressed the meeting.

Whatever disagreements there may have been about tactics there were none about the need to fight the cuts.

Yours sincerely

K Leech, M O'Gara, I Fullerton,
E Palmer, J Moore, A McNair
Members of the Wandsworth
Working Women's Charter Group

Ludicrous Benefit Dear *Spare Rib*,

In late January I received a letter from the Inland Revenue, saying that as from April my tax coding would be changed to allow for the Child Interim Benefit. I used to start being taxed at £24 per week, but now, with this re-assessment, it's about £21, so I'll probably end

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up 25p better off. Unlike you suggest in your article (SR45), I wasn't given any choice in the matter. The way the whole thing's been worked out is absolutely ridiculous.

Yours sincerely

Julie Keating

Isleworth

Middlesex

Not a loaf of bread

Dear Sisters,

With reference to Ms Whyld's letter (SR45) in which she observes more and more women are demanding things for free, Ms Whyld assumes that all women have wages.

Ms Whyld assumes that free s.p. will be substandard; but when we have organised to get free s.p. we will be able to dictate exactly what kind we require, be it made to measure or off the peg. Ms Whyld feels that it is OK to ask for free things from employers but not from the state. Some women have suggested that employers should provide Sanitary Protection Vouchers and pay women for days taken off because of period pain. We have to menstruate to have children. So as the state profits from the future workers we produce, and bring up, they make us pay again for STs and tampons. They make double profits from our ability to reproduce and our natural function of menstruating.

Ms Whyld must have been seduced by the propaganda of the firms which make huge profits on sanitary protection. They play on periods being a taboo subject and the myth that women's bodies are dirty. (Hence 'feminine hygiene'.) It is the secrecy about periods that makes it easy for the

firms to put the price up, because they know women won't discuss an increase in s.p. like they will a loaf of bread, for instance. All women should have free s.p., waged or unwaged, and when we get free s.p., all sorts of questions will be raised about what else we women are entitled to free.

Yours sanguinely

Free Sanitary Protection Campaign

Shouting to the Echoes

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

This is not a letter about your magazine; it may be to do with the liberation of female consciousness, but mainly it's about me.

I'm writing in a fit of frustration, like shouting to the echoes. Age 28, single, unqualified assistant in a local library, I find myself entering my 10th year of part-time studies for 'A' levels, and my second bash at sociology. I actually passed at English a couple of years ago, but since then I had (as a result of the effort), to attend once a week group therapy sessions at a nearby mental home.

I am obsessed with the idea of studying, going to college and qualifying at something-or-other (librarianship perhaps) yet cannot enjoy working towards this goal. I think this is because I am very afraid of being forced into either of two false female stereotypes: the sour puss spinster married to her career or the despised housewife with only her kids to talk about.

I can't raise this subject with my group. The men in particular wonder why I have to be 'intellectual'. They say I think too

much and feel too little, and they may be right. I also wonder whether some of them are critical of me because I am not their ideal of a woman; not sweet and well made-up and quiet and agreeable; not all of the time. I so desperately want to find my own level and to lose my fear and resentment of men (not all men, I might say!).

Well, that's it. I'm glad to have someone, something to write to; perhaps you get scores of letters voicing similar frustrations. Is there a Neurotics Liberation Front? That was meant to be funny! Yours, feeling a bit better, thanks
Eileen Hagger
London E17

Strong middle class family

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I read with elation the letter 'Something for nothing'. Too many people want everything handed to them on a platter. Women's lib is becoming a farce. Somewhere I feel attitudes must change. Perhaps a beginning should be made to alleviate the general ignorance of the public on the aims of women's liberation? I stress that more publicity is necessary. It is up to all feminists to instruct their friends. Women must show that they are strong. Women must uphold their rights — male domination of women has lasted too long. Onward the fight to reform. Every woman must show that she does not rely on men or the State to provide her with all she wants. Everyone is an individual capable of independence. Maybe women can never be equal with men, but in that case the question of similarity and sameness ought to be explored.

Sure, I'm not a socialist, and congratulations to Jane Whyld for speaking out, but why on earth does women's liberation have to be so reliant on socialist backing? Because I come from a strong middle class family, the pressures of society made it hard for me to admit that I am a lesbian, nevertheless I can not change the way I am. It is the attitudes of society that must change. Women's liberation is a medium through which this could occur. In that case no-one should feel excluded because of political views.

Jane Whyld sees liberation as the independence of women and their right to choose what they think is best for themselves. Let us have reasonable wages, independence and recognition of women as a powerful entity in their own right. Let us end the ignorance and misery that surrounds women's liberation. There must be more publicity and action. An end to apathy. If you think these are worthy ideals I should be glad to hear from you.

Let women be joined in strength. Women have remained silent for too long. In sisterhood (believe it or not!)
Kay Lacey
Angmering
Sussex

* indicates that the letter has been cut

Gerrie Moore worked as a prostitute in London. She became a feminist through her experiences on the game and decided to quit. She talked to *Victoria Green* about her life as a prostitute.

Morality and the law have always victimised prostitutes. While the men who buy their services are generally held to be normal, prostitutes are judged to be deviant and criminal. (The act of prostitution is not in itself illegal; the law concerns itself with soliciting, pimping and brothel-keeping, activities necessary to the business of prostitution.)

The 1959 Street Offences Act says: "It shall be an offence for a common prostitute to loiter in a street or public place for the purpose of prostitution." The label 'common prostitute' is bestowed by the police after a woman has been twice cautioned for soliciting. There is no requirement for witnesses nor for a complaint from the public.

Men seeking the services of prostitutes run no such risk. To provoke the law into action against men who harass and accost them, women must lay a charge. A recent paper of a government working party on Vagrancy and Street Offences argues that proof of persistence should be required before kerb-crawlers can be convicted; meanwhile, any woman 'loitering' can be cautioned for soliciting.

Once labelled 'common prostitute', a woman runs the risk of continual harassment. Any time she is walking down the street, she could be committing an offence. Publicans and restaurateurs can be prosecuted for serving known prostitutes. Thus the law affects all women since publicans protect themselves by refusing to serve women who are alone at night.

Such infringements of personal freedom implicit in the laws on prostitution have led to demands for its legalisation. But those who demand de-criminalisation often also want prostitutes registered and licensed by a government agency. State control of prostitution is not new; it is the practise in parts of Europe, the USA and Asia.

Those who argue for state control assume that because of the nature of male sexuality, prostitution is inevitable. It should be regulated humanely to ensure the least possible disturbance to society.

Their argument is seductive because it is usually expressed in terms of the interests of the prostitute. We are told that a licensing system would do away with pimps, provide a secure environment for the women and control the incidence of venereal disease. This argument assumes that control of women and their sexuality will achieve a tidy society. Prostitutes have always been on the wrong end of legislation and always for the same reason: it is men who demand their services and men who seek to control the terms of sale.

Those who favour state-regulated prostitution never propose that customers register with the local authority. The current call for control of the women does not differ from the thinking behind the Contagious Diseases Act late last century which aimed to get rid of VD through the arrest and forcible examination of prostitutes while ignoring the role of their clients.

The state of Nevada has legalised prostitution and, according to Margo St. James of COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics: the prostitutes' union in the USA), this means virtual slavery for the women working there. They must obtain their licence from the Sheriff and must work in closed brothels which take a percentage of their earnings. They are allowed out only at certain times of the day and are forbidden to enter certain areas of town. They must sign on at the brothel for no less than three weeks at a time, they work between 14 and 18 hours a day and most brothels have house rules preventing the women from socialising with each other. If a woman has no pimp she is still pressured into joining a 'family' — that is, support a pimp.

After talking to German women, Margo St. James concluded that the situation where prostitution is state-regulated in Germany is no better. French prostitutes are now fighting to retain their independence. The French government is making life impossible for them as a first step towards state control of prostitution.

The main reason for prostitution is the position of women in society. We are brought up to limit our expectations; undervalued at home and under-educated at school; under-paid at work, excluded from skilled trades, denied promotion and assumed to be dependent not on our skills but on men through

PROSTI

our sexuality.

A girl is encouraged to think that her passport to success is sexual, whether it be for dinner, a job or marriage. If she ends up without that panacea, a husband, and needs money to rear her children, she will find the DHSS teaching her the same old lesson: any sexual relationship she has must, by definition, be a means of support.

Gerrie: "When I was a child I was very conscious that sex was a commodity; although of course I didn't know it in those words. I knew that if I was nice to my dad, flirted with him and made up to him, I could get what I wanted. Money for the cinema, sweets, a new dress — he liked to see me well dressed.

"The first time I really sold myself I was quite young — about 16. I was out of work, I'd just left school; I hitched a lift with a guy who offered me a fiver to go in the back with him.

"I went through that business of sleeping with men I didn't really want; I didn't enjoy it, they expected emotional involvement. I expect I became much more aware that sex was a commodity so why should I give it away for nothing? So I started becoming an amateur sort of pro . . . I wasn't really professional then.

"I really became professional when I was 18. I was doing it for things I really didn't need. Then I fell in love with someone and gave up the game. We lived together until I became pregnant; then he didn't want to know, he rejected me. After the baby was born I went back on the game.

"I tried to get Social Security. I was living off my savings in a bedsitter in Earl's Court. My daughter's father wasn't paying any support. Social Security kept putting me off; they wanted to know the father's name. I didn't want to give it. I did in the end. But they still made it impossible for me.

"This time I really needed the money, I went on the game to earn a living. I was frightened of the idea of my daughter going into care; I couldn't get cheap housing and I couldn't go home to my parents. I really felt the system had let me down. This way I could be independent and not have to get into any marriage scene."

Once a woman decides to capitalise on her sexuality without the protective screen of romance and discretion, she confronts the male establishment. Male criminal activity, especially police corruption, has always flourished in prostitution. The laws provide a framework for exploitation; the police traditionally take advantage of it by demanding a percentage of prostitute's earnings and/or payment in kind in return for non-arrest.

With the police on one side and pimps on the other, a prostitute cannot easily ask for legal protection against assault or intimidation.

Gerrie: "There was one occasion a guy nearly strangled me. I had money ripped off me, I got beaten up once. Rape is quite common but there's no point in going to the police."

Those who want state regulated prostitution argue that simply to de-criminalise it would leave the women open to even more criminal harassment. But prostitutes would feel more secure in asking for the protection of the existing laws on assault and extortion if they were treated as private citizens rather than licensed or unlicensed commodities.

Public attitudes to prostitution are very sexist. They ignore the fact that any business a prostitute contracts is a two-way deal, and affirm the view that when it comes to sex, men need not account for their morality — 'they just have to have it'. And then prostitutes are criticised for their masculine approach to their work. Their lack of discrimination about clients, their separation of emotions from the work — these are professional attitudes usually attributed to men.

TUTION

Gerrie: "They were buying me, but they used to pretend I wasn't a professional. They'd come to pick-up places and have the audacity to behave as if it were all an accident and ask why I was doing it. One client said to me 'Can't you get a man to support you'."

Prostitution exists with the tacit approval of society. Its existence results from, and is necessary to, the restriction of most women to the role of wife and mother; and from the denial of female sexuality. Sexual desire in wives and mothers is seen as incompatible with the image of 'good' women. Prostitution provides men with an alternative form of sexuality; and it is widely accepted that a husband's sexual adventures with prostitutes will not threaten the security of his family.

Gerrie: "It's a power trip for men. They're buying another person. When you're on the game you live in another world.

You can never be yourself, the clients see you in their own way. They ignored everything outside their own stereotyped idea of me. Dark lights, Scotch whisky, cigarettes and 'will you wear the black dress tonight?'

"One wanted me to impersonate a schoolgirl and tease him while he tossed off. Another wanted me to pretend to be his schoolteacher and beat him for being late. He was a managing director or something.

"I used to think I was performing a social service because they might go out and rape kids if they didn't have me.

"But I was always acting; they were buying a performance. One client used to pay me a retainer and visited twice a month pretending I was his mistress and had no other clients. Some thought they would rescue me but I didn't think I needed rescuing; I was onto a good thing.

"I regarded it as a job but I could never be myself. I used to put on a different skin; I was someone other than Gerrie, I was Maggie, or Sue or Linette because that was the only way I could do it.

"It wrecked my relationships completely. I suspected all my boyfriends; they expected me to pay the rent, buy dinner. I was being ripped off on all sides.

"I knew a woman in her late thirties, she lived alone in a room. She'd been married twice and both the husbands had lived off her. She was completely alone, she had no contact with her family, no life outside the game."

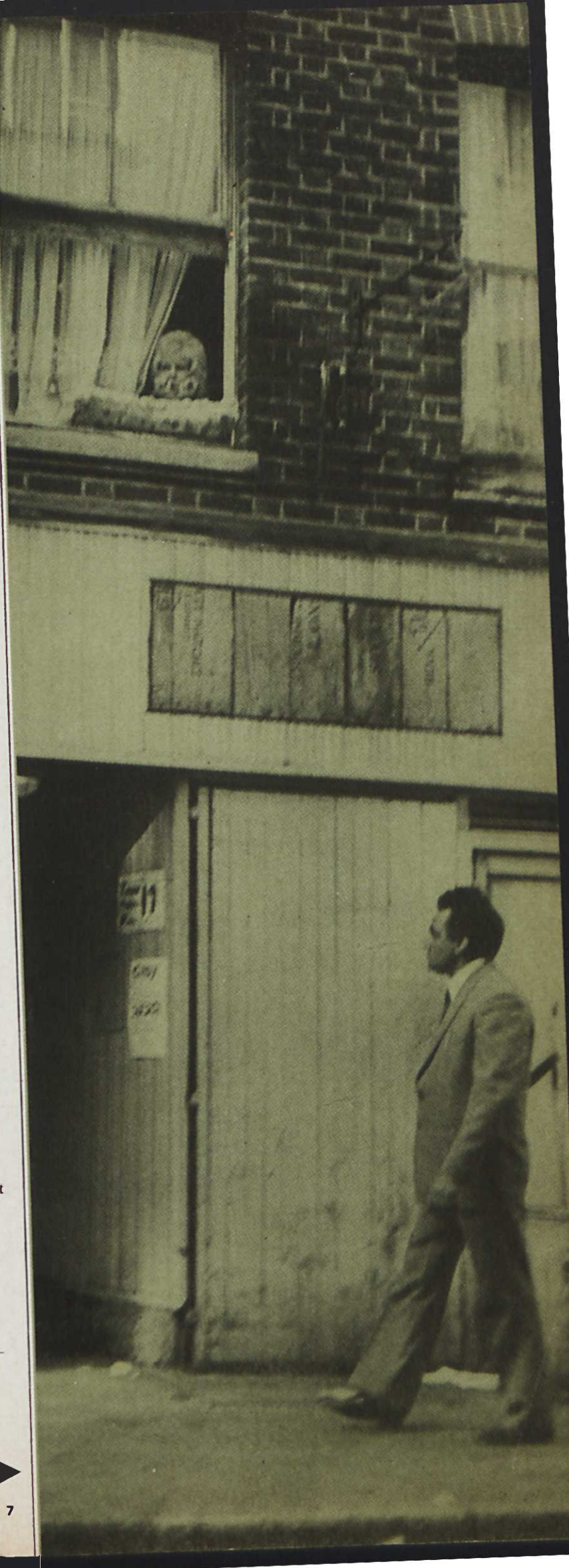
Some prostitutes can earn a lot of money — a decisive factor in choosing to work as a prostitute; but it also makes it almost impossible for women to leave the work, particularly if they have children.

Gerrie: "I earned a lot of money but I had to keep buying clothes and make-up. You have to have a telephone and the flat needs to be reasonable. At least my daughter was well off; I think she benefited actually. Good food, good clothes and a really good nursery school. I couldn't have afforded that on social security, or in any other work I could get.

"I had a washing machine, a good one; a stereo, a television. Things for my home as well as clothes. I've got nothing much left to show for it though, you just spend all the time.

"I was working for the system. I was outside the law with clients who were lawyers and businessmen — people like that — who paid me; and I was spending it all on commodities. You become addicted to capitalism. You just have to look good, drink expensive drinks, that sort of thing."

Prostitutes are stereotyped as pampered good-time girls or pathetic haridans. But many lead lives more conformist and regulated than most.



PROSTITUTION

Gerrie: "I was expected to be very proper. The clients like you to wear conventional clothes, I wasn't supposed to swear. Once when I refused to stand up for the national anthem, my client was embarrassed and furious at the same time but couldn't bring himself to say anything.

"They were all very straight. I had to listen to all their problems, I had to agree with them. I couldn't have any opinions of my own. I wasn't a person to them.

"My domestic chores were much more demanding than they are now. Clients used to call at any time of the day. The flat had to be clean all the time; I had to be ready, made-up and so on. They never think of you having to wash nappies, though some would bring presents for my daughter.

"The worst thing was the boredom, always having to play the part they expected. The sex was the easiest bit: mostly boring, sometimes disgusting but nothing compared to having to act all the time."

Prostitutes are usually isolated from life outside their work. Most of the women find it impossible to get out into an 'ordinary' job and social life.

Gerrie: "Most of the women on the game have no friends outside their work. I was lucky that I did. While you're on the game you have to be very careful. The neighbours are a constant threat, if they give you away the state could take your child away from you.

"I couldn't tell people what I did. I never had my parents to tea. I never had friends to dinner. You never knew when a client would call. I used to worry about being recognised in the street when I was with friends or out shopping.

"There was no way I could get politically involved while I was on the game. I felt isolated, different. I couldn't join the women's movement then. I couldn't identify with it, I felt unacceptable.

"The clients had no idea about feminism. I became a feminist practically overnight. I stuck up posters in my room and began to drink pints. These men would look at my books and posters and make jokes about them."

Prostitutes (like all other women) have a right to lead their lives as they choose. Prostitution must be de-criminalised but all forms of state regulation must be rejected.

Gerrie: "When I started I thought I could control it and that I wouldn't be exploited; but I began to see myself through their eyes. Clients would comment on me, criticise me and I was beginning to accept their attitudes. I was losing myself.

"People outside the life had really strange reactions. It was as though they had this image of what a prostitute should look like, as if we were different from other people. The left-wing men were the worst. One once saw all my books and said 'You actually read?' They were incredible, they'd drink my wine, let me pay for taxis and they were moralistic about my work.

"Women on the game are competing with each other all the time. There were times when we'd get together but there's a definite hierarchy within the game. The change will have to come from the women themselves. PUSSI* is doing a good job in publicising what prostitutes have to put up with.

"Although working class women are often reactionary, when they do become politically aware, they're the most militant. I think prostitution is now the women's issue; the women on the streets will make the change.

"I had to get out. The self-disgust got so strong. I'd like to see prostitution disappear. That would mean a basic change in sexual attitudes. I mean, I just can't visualise women using prostitutes. This sexual liberation thing is a con, a myth; it's completely male-oriented. I just don't see why men *must* have an outlet.

"Prostitution is just another way men keep power, they divide women and that way they control them."□

* PUSSI: Prostitutes United for Social and Sexual Integration is a recently established organisation of prostitutes in the UK.

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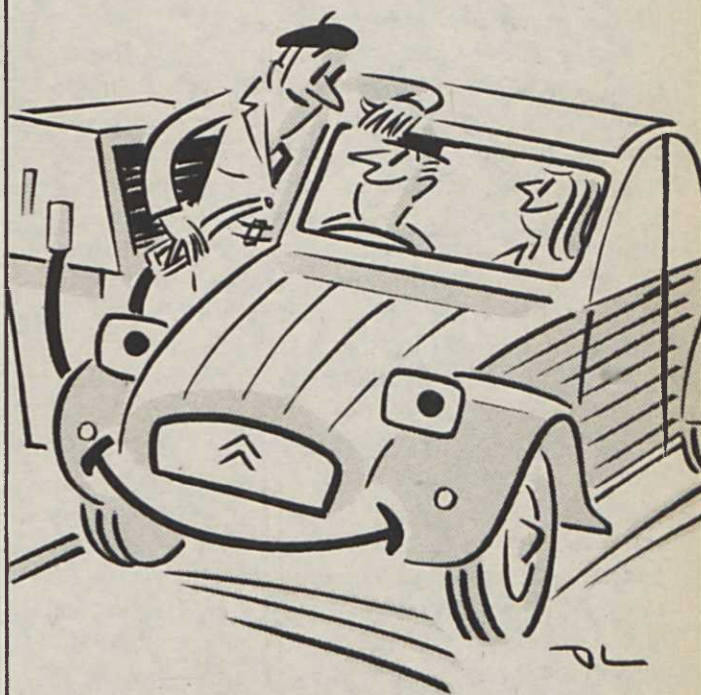
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## CITROËN 2CV





We asked readers to interview themselves and to write about the problems, successes and failures of trying to understand and change personal relationships. We looked forward to being deluged with articles, as we had been when we asked people to write about their lives, feelings and aspirations and how they'd changed under the influence of Women's Liberation. Instead, responses only trickled in and it hit us (a bit late in the day) just what we were asking of you.

For a start it's very difficult to explain what's good in a relationship when sexual relationships (and that's what most people wrote about) are kept so private. It's even considered disloyal to talk about a relationship with other people. So how can you begin to share something which has been so exclusive? What words are there to use other than love story language? Not surprisingly most people wrote about their relationship after the event — often bitterly.

If it's hard to explain why a relationship is worth having, then how can you convince readers that it's worth struggling to change and understand it. That's what we asked people to describe, but how many of us are going to call the rows we have and the new resolutions we make, "struggling to change and understand?" Most writers looked only at external changes and disasters like a man going back to his wife or parents intervening in a gay relationship.

And even if a relationship is alive and doing well, how can you bring someone to life on paper when you are so close to them that you can hardly see them yourself? In nearly all the articles we received on man-woman relationships, the man remains a shadowy insubstantial figure. He may admit that rigid male/female sex roles are oppressive in a relationship, but it's not clear that he's putting a real effort into changing things. Meanwhile women battle on with their bright new expectations, becoming increasingly frustrated and confused, blaming themselves when nothing seems to change.

We are going to publish some of the contributions we received and we hope that the problems aired about relationships between women, between women and men, between families, will inspire more contributions. Please keep your article to not more than 1,500 words and send it to Relationships, *Spare Rib*, 9 Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS with an SAE.



John and I aren't married, although we've been living together for a couple of years. I used to be fairly proud of that — escaping the legal but meaningless bonds and so on — now I'm not so sure. Getting married is largely an outdated and hypocritical business — and yet people still do it all the time. And looking at a lot of them it seems to me that their marriages were at least a declaration of confidence in the future; a declaration of sureness of feelings that I envy.

John and I have never felt a security or confidence in each other. Or to be precise — *I* have never felt a security or confidence in my feelings for John. They wax and wane, that's the trouble. Sometimes I feel so close to him and sometimes I hate him. Sometimes I am alive to his every move, and sometimes I am indifferent to him. And I know that these changes are brought about by my expectations which are so often disappointed. I want so much out of the relationship. I want a truly deep understanding and liking which will reassure me constantly that we are the best of friends, and I want a lover who is both passionate and tender. I want to be able to read his mind and his heart and I want him to read mine. To this end, I often lay my mind and heart out on a plate for him and then feel frustrated because he can't or won't or doesn't need to do the same.

Perhaps, in spite of my conscious rejection of the *Woman's Own* ideal relationship, I am bogged down and wallowing in romantic hang-overs that men don't have. I have had a "good job", and neither wanted marriage nor, so far, children, always a career and equality, and yet, even so, a relationship with a man has always been the thing of central importance in my life. But I can't just let it happen. I worry at it. As John puts it — I keep digging it up to see if it's growing.

If anybody is the wronged party in our relationship it's John. Because I don't behave consistently towards him he is developing a guardedness and nervousness towards me. He can't be sure what my reactions to anything will be and he can't be sure whether I'll come home at the end of the day with a smile or a scowl for him, and so he seems to hide himself so as not to get hurt, I suppose. And can you blame him?

You may wonder at this mutual oppression. We have talked about splitting up, but as yet the ties are too tight. I'm sorry if this sounds like romantic mush, but I haven't lived with John for 2 years and not known the good times. When I reach a phase of hardness and decide I must break the bonds for both our sakes, a



# Keep digging our relationship up"

By Sue Cox



phase of softness and affection follows close on its heels and no change results. Does this strike a chord with any of you? Notice that I say *I* must break the bonds. John wouldn't, partly because he now has a new job in this town while I have just given one up, making it easier for me to move, and partly because he doesn't make decisions easily. In fact, he's even more laboured than me. I think he waits in the hope that some miracle cure will steady my temperament and all will end happily. I've hoped and I'm growing old waiting.

If things aren't so good, why don't we try spreading our wings without talking about cataclysmic farewells and complete breaks? I don't feel free enough to experiment. My freedom isn't curtailed consciously by John; it's curtailed more by my own temperament, conditioning and hang-ups. I believe in my head that living exclusively with one person of the opposite sex, with or without children, is a restricting and neurosis producing business, but I am still light years from doing anything about it. I wonder if I set my sights too far. I have been looking for something high and wild. Should I recognise my own limitations imposed partly by my uneventful, middle class, fairly spoiled upbringing, or should I strive for something I can't yet identify — some soaring freedom perhaps, some strength that will bolster my spirit and make life a joy to wake up to every day.

To come back to John and I. Sex is, predictably enough, a potential hang-up as well as a pleasure in this situation. John could fancy it any time. I can fancy it when and if the moment is right — usually when it arises out of a feeling of closeness through the sharing of something else. Because I know it's frustrating for a bloke to be refused, and because I'm liking him well enough, even if not fancying him, I try to oblige. When I try to oblige I usually can't. One tension brings on another. And the tension of my not really wanting him inside me makes it difficult for him. We both end up frustrated; physically because we can't make it, and mentally because we've struggled for it like it's a Big Money Prize. The Consumer Society. Other times, it's just John who's frustrated because I'm spark out when I hit the pillow.

If two people share the same bed every night of the year, it strikes me as hardly surprising that their separate beings can't always achieve a perfect union. When we make love, when we get that far, it's usually great for both of us, and I wonder then why we don't do it more often. I can't get the hang of the warm up. The transfer from feelings of warmth and gentleness to feelings of

energy and desire is a hard one. And I have found myself often making this transfer by silently telling myself as we play with each other that I'm going to like this, aren't I? Oh yes, if I can just stick with it a while how well rewarded will I be. So much for the Act of Love. John believes that if we made love more often our relationship would settle down. I believe that our sex life is a symptom of the disease.

I am diverted by the phrase "settle down". An expression that is totally abhorrent to me. I have a horror of settling down if it means banality, ordinariness, predictability. And I wonder if that is why I keep digging our relationship up to see if it's growing. To create some trouble and drama? To shake it about so it doesn't get boring? And yet — I really don't want this upset to go on. I am exhausted by my own inconsistency. What I really want, I suppose, is for the relationship to settle on a plane that is deeper and more fulfilling and exciting than what I take to be the norm behind the front doors down our road. But I am full of contradictions — I just said that I believe that one to one relationships are not ideal anyway. Please can I be excused my contradictions in a world that changes so fast?

If John and I keep living together it may be because we have found some peace, or because change is too difficult. If we split up I may join a commune or I may get right down to the straight and narrow and acquire a smart hat and a regular bed time when I'm 45.

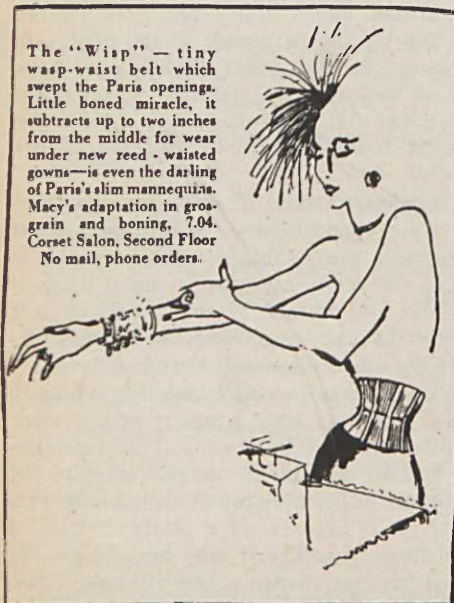
One thing's for sure — it's a great strain living with a man whom you admire on one hand for his ability to shake off many of the accepted and odious norms of his sex, and whom you resent on the other hand with an unreasonable but ever present resentment for his maleness — for the fact that he and his like have it easier than us. It seems to me that from this resentment comes a general anti-male feeling which I often find in *Spare Rib*, and it disturbs me. I think that women's liberation is a pre-requisite for people's liberation, but if we come to hate our "oppressors" in the process of freeing ourselves, what sort of world will we have made for ourselves? Is a world divided into opposing sexual camps more preferable than a world divided into the haves and have-nots?

I love John. I hate him. I admire him. I resent him. But I want to be on the same side as him fighting the other buggers. And so, perhaps, I am holding back from the freedom of individuality. A cop out? I should like to know what any of you think. □





The 'Gibson Girl' — this S-shaped figure was the fashionable ideal of the pre-1914 war years.



"Little boned miracle". An advertisement in 1946. Hardly a 'New Look' tight metal belts were worn in Crete in 1500 BC.▲

Polaire, considered super sexy, around 1908.



# FASHIONABLE BONDAGE

Why do we still squeeze into too-tight jeans and perch on platform shoes? In the second of her series of articles, Lisa Tickner delves into the erotic for an explanation.

*"Women push and press into their kidskin sheath as if it were a pair of gloves. The legs are clasped the full length, the skirt is tight, woman is impeded in her movements, one can feel the ribbon fettering all from behind . . . knees touch, visibly . . . woman sits down sideways, she cannot do otherwise and this uncomfortable attitude is not ungracious . . ."*

Man observes, approves, encourages; Woman is the victim, either of fashion and the social context in general, or of her own masochistic satisfaction — the result of internalizing her role as the seen, the passive object of admiration. Many aspects of fashionable female dress have contained overtones of such bondage fetishism. Although there have been many periods when both sexes have worn restrictive clothing, and although men have occasionally adopted chunky high-heeled shoes and boots, the truly fantastic re-shaping of the natural silhouette, together with the hampering of natural movement by high, unstable heels, low-set sleeves and excessively tight or bulky skirts is an exclusively female phenomenon. Which is to say that a distinction in the social interpretation of male and female sexuality has itself determined differences in dress, whilst in turn the visual appearance of men and women has seemed to emphasize the distinctions in their social role.

There are two major areas in which the supposedly innate passivity of women (and their actual economic and social dependence) has been grotesquely exaggerated: the reshaping of the body & the restructuring of natural posture through tight lacing; and the restriction of a natural gait by unstable footwear, ankle chains, hobble skirts, heavy trains, and even serious mutilation of the feet.

The idea of the slender waist can be traced at least as far back as the tight metal belts worn by both sexes in Minoan Crete. But not until the end of the middle ages did the corset become an essential part of European female clothing. From the early 16th century until the First World War, with the single and partial exception of the Regency period, no conventional, fashionable woman considered herself dressed without one. Nor has the 20th century abolished, though it has reduced, the degree of restriction in stylish clothing. The "New Look" of 1947 revived the cinched waist, and re-invented the "waspie" to enforce it. Even slender teenagers wore "roll-ons" and "panty-girdles" in the 1950s and early 1960s, and no doubt will do so again.

The corset, or the corset-bodice, was

not only a feature of fashionable dress, but also of many peasant costumes. The Circassians, for example, attached considerable importance to the wasp waist, and bound the bodies of their daughters with leather which was not removed until their wedding night. A number of 19th century women's magazines also advocated early lacing in order to mould and recreate a young body into the contemporary ideal. The goal was a 20", a 19" or even a 17" waist, and women were prepared to suffer to achieve it. *"No girl in the physiology class had so small a waist. I had occasional fainting fits, which rendered me interesting. For these and the ugly pain in the side, the cough and palpitations, physicians were called in. If they thought corsets they did not mention them. Doctors were delicate in those days. Not knowing what to do, they bled me."*

Through the restriction of the waist the curves of bust and hips were exaggerated both physically and by visual contrast the breasts were rendered more prominent, and breathing activity was displaced upward. Existing anatomical distinctions between the sexes were thus increased, the relationship between the female skeleton and its internal organs was considered by many unique; the "thoracic" breathing process of women was distinguished from the "abdominal" breathing of men.

Despite a certain amount of fictional advertising copy promising comfort and hygiene, it was obviously accepted in practice that beauty must be paid for by physical suffering.

*"Despite the constraint of her whalebone prison, and her shoes which are a torture to her, woman is becoming ever more beautiful and perfect."*

Contemporary standards of beauty contained powerful sado-masochistic elements — it was not in spite of, but because of her whalebone prison and tortuous shoes that woman approached beauty and perfection.

The tightness of the corset was both sexual and modest: an ambivalence typical of many fashions, but especially characteristic of restrictive clothing. Of course perfectly respectable fashionable women wore corsets for centuries without considering their sexual connotations. Indeed the reverse was often the case: "straight-laced" and "loose" are adjectives used of morality as well as bodies, and there are indications that a woman without stays was considered to be morally as well as physically out of control. This respectability was concurrent with an underground iconography of the



corset as a fetish object — the only guise in which, like other once conventional items of women's clothing including stiletto heels, it still flourishes. This is yet another instance of that sexual ambiguity and hypocrisy, the confusion of modesty and display and of social with aesthetic values, which characterise the subject of fashion.

Even Baudelaire enhances his image of the Fatal Woman by a perverse delight in the combination of a soft and sensuous body crushed by its rigid casing: an enticing mixture of the hard and the yielding, the sadistic and the masochistic. This is a double edged ideal, expressed in rather less poetic terms by the military historian, Sir Basil Liddell Hart.

*"The corset has a dual quality. It incalculates self discipline and represents the principle of orderliness. At the same time it enhances attractiveness by accentuating womanly curves and suggesting a concealed softness. In fact it combines the feminine desire to combine opposites — 'to have it both ways'. In the occasional intervals when woman has abandoned it she has thus lost it both ways. Woman's attractiveness easily degenerates into sloppiness, which saps both attraction and respect."*

Woman is again identified with Nature, raw and uncontrolled, as opposed to man's identification with Culture which brings order and civilisation to natural chaos. This idea is enforced by a parallel belief in the corset as the armour of virtue and in the un-laced woman as the epitome of license.

Thorstein Veblen proposes an economic explanation in the *Theory of the Leisure Class*. He suggests that clothing was chosen, in the main, to indicate social standing, and could be doubly effective if it demonstrated as ability to consume, at the same time as it emphasised that the wearer was not required to earn a living.

*"The corset is . . . (an instrument of) mutilation for the purpose of lowering the subject's vitality and rendering her personally and obviously unfit for work. It is true, the corset impairs the personal attractiveness of the wearer (ie when naked), but the loss suffered on that score is offset by the gain in reputability which comes of her visibly increased expensiveness and infirmity."*

A Chinese woman with bound feet or a Victorian girl, so tightly laced that her rib cage and lungs were constricted and she could not breathe deeply, were alike demonstrating their social status, or rather that of their husbands and fathers.

We experience feelings of discomfort now looking at a hundred year old photograph of a waist laced to 17" or 18", and downright disgust when faced with an image of Chinese footbinding. Our concept of the ideal body shape has become more closely identified with the natural but this is because the social context has changed, and with it the characteristics which are considered desirable in women. The corset seemed viable even indispensable to the Victorians because it was an object locked into the attitudes and systems of the time.

Rudofsky suggests that a hobbled horse

or tethered goat may originally have inspired a herdsman similarly to restrict women. The comparison is apt: for they also were part of his possessions and if the idea was rarely practicable, it was always symbolic. Stepping-chains as such, though common in some cultures, were not indispensable — awkward footgear, restrictive binding or heavy leg-ornaments could have the same effect in reproducing a state of actual or implied captivity.

The straightforward restraining action of unnatural footwear was usually in some way masked and elaborated by other factors, and the bonds became eroticized and (or) ended up as symbols of wealth and status.

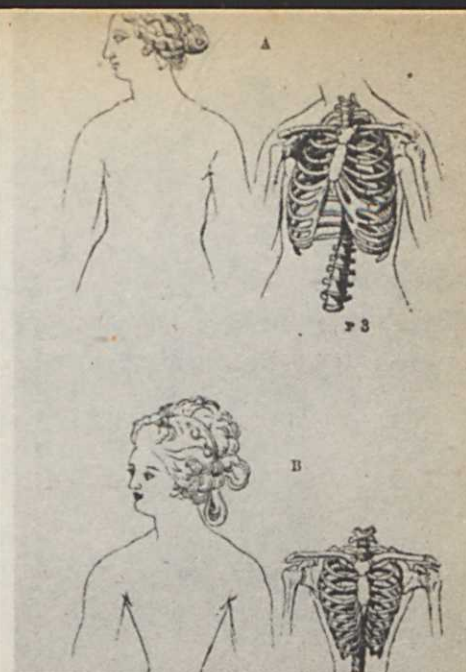
The wearing of stilted shoes came to the West via Venice, where they were descended from Eastern footwear like the Syrian clogs of "Kubkabs". The eroticism of the precarious walk was closely linked with a masculine concept of feminine helplessness, and almost complete incapacity was induced by such extreme examples as the Venetian "chopines", so tall and unstable that the wearer could not walk unaided. Socially they reflected the status of the wearer according to their height; sexually they were both the instrument and the expression of her submission. This set up a curious moral paradox. On the one hand they were condemned as the very epitome of fashionable trivia, and on the other they were accepted and indulged as symbols of restraint and enforced chastity.

In the 17th century high heels were affected by the nobility of both sexes, but distinctions in male and female footwear were still enforced. Fashionable men at the court of Louis XIV displayed chunky scarlet heels several inches high; but they were massively solid and completely stable. The French Revolution reintroduced flat shoes, no doubt as simpler and more democratic; and when high heels re-appeared, at least until just recently, they had become an exclusively feminine accessory.

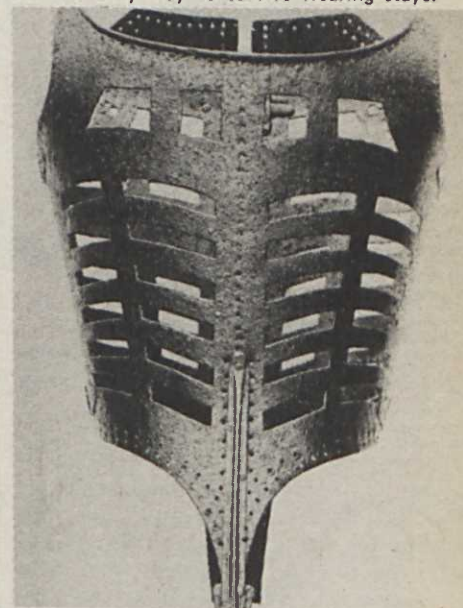
The least stable and most damaging this century has been the stiletto. It was first seen at Dior's opening in 1952, and was the result of new developments in metallurgy which permitted the heel to be reduced to a slender spike. Its very precariousness made balance difficult, changed body-posture, restricted free movement and appeared to emphasize the smallness of the foot. It is also significant that the stiletto was adopted by the generation who, after the austerity but activity of their war-time roles, were seduced in reaction by the 'Feminine Mystique'.

Recent developments in platform shoes and boots have been once again ambivalent. Compared with the dainty Victorian slipper they have a tougher, almost 'masculine' appearance, but they're still precarious, and share the structural instability of stilted and elevated footwear. Like the crinoline they are simultaneously assertive in scale and bulk, and restrictive and cumbersome in effect.

At least the tradition of high-heeled footwear in the West has been erratic and



Thoracic breathing — seen as naturally distinct from the abdominal breathing of men — was the only way to survive wearing stays.



16th century iron corset. ▲

Middle-class woman hobbling down Corporation Street, Birmingham in 1914. Painting by Joseph Edward Southall.







Servants steer their mistress perched on 9 inch 'chopines' through the streets of Venice 1485.



A bound foot — for over a thousand years the ultimate Chinese sex object.



Platforms — the effect of bound feet without the permanent mutilation.

partial compared with the extraordinary history of Chinese footbinding. This was in many ways a parallel to the European fascination for the corseted waist: a long and complex tradition established the implications of wealth and status, the erotic celebration of the submissive woman, the enforcement of her chastity, and at the same time the exaggeration of her desirability. The Cinderella obsession with a tiny foot was intimately related to the position of women in Chinese society, and formed part of a code of feminine behaviour which valued above all quietness and restraint, gracefulness and poise.

Yet footbinding is one of the most extreme examples of an aesthetic preference for the artificial, however bizarre, above the natural. It did not imply restraint, it crippled: a systematic and irrevocable mutilation which was carried out for more than a thousand years, filtering down over a period of time from the court dancers and the upper classes to wider sections of the community, until peasant women with bandaged feet were crawling to draw water or work in the fields. The instep was broken and deformed in childhood, the bandages pushing the heel up to the ball of the foot, and crushing the smaller toes beneath the sole. This forced the victims in later life, effectively to walk on their big toes. Adele Field, a missionary in Swatow during the 1880s described how *"The flesh often became putrescent during the binding, and portions sloughed off from the sole; sometimes one or more toes dropped off. The pain continued for about a year and then diminished, until at the end of two years the feet were practically dead and painless."*

There is overwhelming evidence, in part from very moving personal testimonies, that the child suffered intensely during the early stages; but the mother's natural compassion was offset by social considerations.

*"I begged mother to let out the binding but she replied that it would have to be endured because only through it could I achieve the elegant lotus steps. She cautioned me that otherwise my feet would become foot-long lotus boats and prevent me from getting married. After school was recessed, I wanted to join my*

*brothers and sisters in play, but my feet were immovable. From this time on, I lost my former activeness and spent restless and pain-filled nights."*

Being born female was often regarded as retribution for the evil of a former life, and a mother might justify her actions by reminding a suffering daughter that the pain of footbinding was the punishment due to a previous existence. On the other hand they were also encouraged by the belief that women who had bound feet and long fingernails, ie those with even the physical attributes of the wealthy, would be treated in the after-world like members of the upper classes.

The bound foot, like the corset, was a vicarious indication of the status of a male 'owner', who demonstrated his financial ability to support an expensive, useless, but decorative wife. The fashion was first adopted by the upper classes, who tended to bind most tightly, aiming at the smallest foot and total incapacity. They were emulated by the lower ranks, partly through social ambition and partly because the aesthetic of the tiny foot had for this reason, become widely established.

On the whole both apologists and critics found it sexually stimulating, and on that basis rested their defence (it is part of the nature of women to make themselves more attractive to men), or constructed their attack (on lewdness and lasciviousness). Like the corseted European waist it was considered to be simultaneously modest and erotic, provoking in the observer a reaction compounded of lust and pity. The tiny and fragile "lotus hook" was a highly sensual area for the Chinese, an essential part of sexual foreplay, and apparently also an object of mild fetishism for the largest section of the male population. In addition to its own erotic attractions, the tiny foot was appreciated because of its supposed physical effects. This was summed up by a Taiwanese doctor:

*"Footbinding had a physical influence on a woman's body. Her swaying walk attracted male attention. When the foot-bound woman went walking, the lower part of her body was in a state of tension. This caused the skin and flesh of her legs and also the skin and flesh of her vagina*

*to become tighter. The woman's buttocks, as a result of walking, became larger and more attractive sexually to the male."*

Of course the custom did not continue unchallenged: the Manchus were already turning against it in the 17th century, and 19th century reactions were supported by a growing number of missionaries and their wives, although they were more concerned with an "unnatural" practice than with the overall emancipation of women. Not until the 1890s was the natural foot movement widely identified with women's rights.

Apologists were likely to defend the practice against European critics by comparing it favourably with the use of the corset.

*"We find this deformity of the feet ridiculous, but it pleases the Chinese. What would we say in Europe if a society of celestials made a campaign against the corset? Deformity for deformity, which is the more ridiculous: that which consequently produces a certain difficulty in walking, or that which, compressing the stomach, dislocating the kidneys, crushing the liver and constricting the heart, often prevents women from having fine children?"*

Perhaps the last ironic word should be left with a Chinese signing himself 'Suh-ho', who published in the *New Republic* in 1915 a satirical essay ostensibly 'In Praise of Footbinding': it is a passage which sums up one crucial aspect of the fashionable dependency of women.

*"The bound foot is the condition of a life of dignity for man, of contentment for woman. Let me make this clear. I am a Chinese fairly typical of my class. I pored too much over classic texts in my youth and dimmed my eyes, narrowed my chest, crooked my back. My memory is not strong, and in an old civilisation there is a vast deal to learn before you can know anything. Accordingly among scholars I cut a poor figure. I am timid, and my voice plays me false in gatherings of men. But to my footbound wife, confined for life to her house except when I bear her in my arms to her palanquin, my stride is heroic, my voice is that of a roaring lion, my wisdom is of the sages. To her I am the world; I am life itself."* □



# NEWS

*Since the Husbands Rule was changed in 1974, women born or settled in Britain have had the right to live in Britain with their foreign husbands. But the Home Office is trying to get round this. Amrit Wilson continues her investigation:*

The night before Ann and Ravi were due to get married, Ravi's flat was raided by police and immigration officers. He was taken to the police station and locked up in a cell. There he was asked: "How often have you had sex with your fiancée? Why are you marrying her? Has she got big tits? Who arranged your marriage?" Ravi was released after five hours in police cells.

He and Ann had met in India and known each other for three years. The reason for the interrogation appears to have been only that Ravi is Indian and Ann is British. The raid, which took place in October 1975, is the first case of harassment of married and engaged couples that I know of. They have now become fairly common.

Till two years ago, British women were not allowed to live in Britain with their foreign husbands. In June 1974, after a Private Members' Bill from Lena Jeger MP and a lot of pressure from the women's movement, the Husbands Rule was changed.

This has been the only move towards sexual equality in a blatantly sexist and racist immigration law, so it's particularly important that it be implemented fairly. From the dozens of cases I have come across it looks as though immigration officers are seeking to harass the very people whose rights the changed Rule is meant to protect.

**A "Genuine Relationship"?**  
Alex Lyon, who till April 14 was the Minister with Special Responsibility for Immigration, told me in an interview earlier this year: "It may be that some questions are asked about sexual intercourse in relation

BEGONIA TAMARIT



Gulshen Gunduz at her place of work

## "WHY are you marrying her?"

to a marriage. We have to be on our guard against a bogus marriage, a marriage of convenience. We have to be satisfied that the marriage is a genuine one in the sense that there is a relationship."

But wasn't it the job of immigration officers to follow the law rather than make moral judgements about it? Were these couples breaking the law? "Oh yes," said Mr Lyon, "because it is not a valid marriage for our purpose."

This argument that marriage is a moral rather than a purely legal contract has been used

actually to keep married couples apart. Of course in all cases it is immigration officers who decide whether couples have a "genuine relationship".

Gulshen Gunduz, a Cypriot woman settled in Britain, went to Turkey to marry her Turkish husband, Engin, but was then told he would not be allowed into Britain.

Gulshen had met Engin in Britain in 1970. They decided to get married in 1974, but were delayed because Gulshen had lost her divorce papers from a previous marriage. Before she had found the papers, Engin

was arrested and put in prison — his crime was that he had overstayed his visa.

Engin was placed in the maximum security wing of Pentonville prison. "There," says Gulshen, "I was not allowed to visit him till he sent me a letter and even after that I was only allowed to visit once in two weeks." Eventually Engin was moved from the maximum security wing, where he had been placed by mistake, to another part of the prison where about 300 immigrants were being held for such crimes as having the wrong stamps in their passports.

When Engin was deported, Gulshen went to Turkey to marry him. However when they tried to return to Britain he was not given an Entry Certificate. Gulshen's MP, Joyce Butler, took the case up with Alex Lyon. His reply was: "In the circumstances I have been bound to view his marriage after having been in Turkey for only five months following his removal from this country, with some suspicion that on his part it might have been a marriage of convenience. Establishing a person's status in such circumstances does take time." (So the worldly-wise patriarchs of the Home Office have to protect British women from marriages of convenience!)

After a certain amount of press publicity, Engin was given his papers for entry. But even when he did arrive he and Gulshen were questioned for two hours at the airport. Gulshen was asked: "Why don't you go back to Turkey?" (Gulshen is not Turkish.)

### Excluding Immigrants

Is the Home Office going to accept the marriage certificate as proof of marriage or not? Under Alex Lyon (a Methodist lay preacher) it seems that the answer was no — the reasons given were "moral".

But the morality of it is of no importance — whether it is the Christian type of "morality" which has kept women in subjugation for so long, or the new Home Office brand which permits the prolonged separa-



# NEWS

tion of mother and child, of husband and wife.

Most married couples being harrassed are married in the usual sense of the word. The real reason why they are being questioned is that the Home Office wants to exclude immigrants. The marriage certificate is after all proof of a state-blessed relationship with a man, but it is also evidence of a legal contract — a contract which gives a woman the right to live in Britain with the man she chooses to marry.

When a British man marries a foreign woman no questions are asked. In fact, High Court judges have ruled more than once that marriages of convenience contracted for the express purpose of getting through British immigration control are perfectly valid from a legal point of view.

In one case, heard in 1955, a German woman, Bertha Kraft, wanted to come to Britain to live with Abraham Springer. Springer's first wife refused to divorce him, so to get into

Britain Bertha Kraft married Samuel Silver, Abraham's step-brother. Bertha met Samuel only once more in the next 23 years.

However, when Abraham, with whom she'd been living, died and Bertha wanted to remarry, she was unable to have her marriage to Samuel annulled. The judge ruled that her marriage to Samuel Silver was valid because there was no element of duress. This case is one of several which show that the Home Office is stepping outside the law in its treatment of marriage now.

Brynmor Johns has taken over from Alex Lyon as Minister with Special Responsibility for Immigration. Will the Home Office change its policy of harrassing couples like Ravi and Ann? Perhaps the Labour Government should be reminded of its promise of sexual equality for women — and reminded that equality depends not only on the law but on its implementation. □

## NIGHTCLEANER WINS CASE

An Industrial Tribunal in London has decided unanimously that nightcleaner Myrtle Wardally, one of four to take their employer to court (SR 45), was unfairly dismissed.

The Tribunal found the employer's evidence on the decline in the quality of her work "inconclusive", and felt his warning was given too long before the date of dismissal to be relevant.

"Your repeated absenteeism

has reached intolerable proportions", Rhoda of Cleanagents Ltd had said. But the Tribunal were not satisfied that her absenteeism between the date of warning (July 75) and of dismissal (October 75) was worse than previously.

And they considered that Rhoda's real reason for dismissal was that "he wanted to take advantage of what he thought were good and fair grounds for dismissing the applicant before it became necessary to dismiss her for redundancy." They awarded her compensation of £271.80p.

A campaign against sex discrimination in schools was launched at the annual con-

ference of the National Union of Teachers.

"We should stop calling for 'the strong boys' to carry the desks and the girls to make the coffee."

Ways of fighting sexism in schoolbooks — not just reading schemes, but scientific textbooks as well — were discussed.

Here's what *The Sun* had to say about it:

## The dunces

WHAT A daft and dreary lot of fanatics turned up at the National Union of Teachers conference at Scarborough.

They solemnly demanded a ban on famous books for children like the Janet and John series.

Why? Simply because these popular books are "sexist" —

they show little girls helping their mums in the kitchen and little boys helping their dads. Only the dunces of the NUT can really imagine that girls are no different from boys. People like these give the otherwise sensible cause of equal rights for women a bad name.



## LONDON CHAUVINISM?

Women's right to work and equal rights and opportunities for lesbians were among proposed additions to the Working Women's Charter, passed at the National Working Women's Charter Conference in Coventry on April 10-11.

These additions, together with many other alterations, are to be a basis for discussion before final approval of a revised Charter at a further conference to be called within a year.

The London Planning Committee proposed that their alterations be adopted as immediate policy for the whole campaign, but a decision to wait was taken as a result of an amendment put by Coventry Charter Group and Hackney Nursery Campaign.

The Coventry and Hackney women felt that the London Planning Committee's alterations were much too long — "The Working Women's Charter is not a definitive programme of demands, but a banner for the fight for women's rights," so it should be forceful and concise.

They proposed that a working party be set up to circulate discussion documents, feeling that there hadn't been enough discussion before the conference among women's groups, union branches and other bodies who had adopted the Charter, and that the changes didn't take into account the effect of the Equal Pay, Sex Discrimination and Employment Protection Acts. The Charter should show that legislation has not ensured equality.

But the decision not to alter the Charter at conference didn't stop people discussing the suggestions. This tended to supercede any exchange among local groups on problems and methods of working on a ten

point document. Even in the workshops the tendency was to concentrate on specific verbal alterations.

It's impossible to rewrite a document on the floor of a 300-strong conference, so only alterations submitted in advance or arising out of workshops were accepted for discussion and vote.

Procedural problems of composing amendments and strictly limiting speakers' time led to something of a bureaucratic nightmare. Though perhaps inevitable in a conference committed to altering the plainly inadequate existing Charter, this did lead to antagonism towards the organisers from the floor. Many were mystified by the apparent victory of structure over democracy and political debate, and concerned at the apparent "London chauvinism" and the neglect of local activities.

The London Planning Committee's recommendations were all accepted with some amendments, and a 15-woman Secretariat was elected, as well as the working party of 16 proposed by Coventry.

A preliminary clause was added: "For the right of women to work. Security of employment for part-time and casual workers."

Clauses on equal opportunity, education and legal status were extended to cover age, sexual orientation, race and marital status. The nursery clause now calls for free state-financed, community-controlled child-care with flexible hours. The maternity leave clause was extended to cover paternity leave, and the Charter now demands allowances of £5 for each child. □

Rosalind Carne

For conference papers and details of motions passed, write to Jill Daniels, the new Campaign Secretary, at 16 Crookham Rd., London SW6.

## NEWS COPY DATES

Spare Rib 48 is on sale from June 16. News stories for that issue should reach us by May 21. It will help us to plan the section if you can let us know in advance what you want to write about and roughly how long it will be. For No.49 the news copydate is June 18. (If it's urgent, it's worth trying after these dates.)



*Three equal pay skirmishes in Scotland earlier this year ended in a hat-trick for the radical staff union TASS, and in their own way are cameos of striking progress.*

*While the last and longest of these strikes was drawing to a close, TASS was chalking up another important victory at the American-owned General Motors without any industrial action being taken.*

The longest of the three strikes was at Cockburn's Valves on the Hillington industrial estate near Paisley. The place had been organised for only about 18 months.

The lowest paid male clerk, a man who can't type, and whose job title was dressed up to 'clerical gateman, goods inward clerk' was earning £50.83: more than £10 more than comptometer operators and the clerkess-typists, and approaching £20 more than the lowest paid clerkess.

After months of negotiation the company refused to budge, using the £6 limit as an excuse. "So we started guerilla warfare", explained Pearl O'Neill. "We had lightning strikes by telephonists and telex operators, and the despatch manager and assistant came out."

The strike proper was provoked when the company suspended 23-year-old Jim McNeill for refusing to redirect a telephone call. He was one of the 14 men who stuck it out with 18 women for 12 weeks — the strike represented no economic gains for the men themselves.

"We couldn't have survived the strike without the support of the men", said Margaret Lavelle, 27, who started her job only two weeks before the staff walked out.

Nothing was going in past the pickets in their caravanette picket-post, loaned to them by a sympathetic supervisor inside the factory, and nothing was coming out.

Union members in the companies supplied by Cockburn's also guaranteed that any materials from the factory would not be used, and the management's attempts to get stuff into the plant at dead of night were also scotched by the production workers.

Before the dispute, the women

barely knew each other's rates — a typical tactic in dividing workers one from another. 24-year-old Sarah Walker worked with several other clerkess-typists — all on different rates. "I just took it for granted we were on the same scale, but one was on £31, I was on £34, and the other got £36.50 — all doing the same job."

## Working in the Dinner Hour

A similar story at a second factory, Wheway Watson's, where ten workers, nine women and a man, walked out on Jan 9, and stayed out for six weeks. "The job was poorly paid," said Edith Hannaghan. "One girl had been there eight years and was earning £4 less than me. Another had been there nine and a half years, she worked right through her dinner hour, and got £31 a week. They'd stuck it all those years. It's a good wee job you see."

Although not such a good wee job for some. Turnover was particularly high because "the bosses were a bit domineering."

Early on, the company, part of the Ohio-based multinational corporation Columbus McKinnon Inc., made individual offers to four of the senior women, with nothing for the juniors. A bad error of judgement this. There was a strong sense among the strikers of justice for the lowest paid, who as single women were hit hardest economically by being on strike.

## Big Beach Windbreaker

And so the strikers settled in for the duration. There's something about any strike involving

women. Life on the picketline is civilised.

The Cockburn's strikers sat snug in their borrowed van, sheltered against the year's worst weather.

At Wheway Watson, also based on the Hillington estate, Edith Hannaghan brought along a great big beach windbreaker. "I'd got it years before, but it was so big that my husband would never entertain it on holiday. We hammered it daily into the ground, and let it billow away. You see we had the worst of the weather. People just about collapsed when they saw this. It was a real eye-catcher. I think a lot of people passing thought it was a fete!"

"I think this is quite important in a strike, to let yourself be seen. I brought two trays in, and wrote our slogans on them. It is important to let your case be known."

Picketing proved something of a tester for the women at both factories. "The younger ones were a bit backward at first."

"I was horrified at the thought at first," said Margaret Lavelle from Cockburn's.

"But you do it. You begin to believe in it." At both factories production was brought to a standstill.

After six weeks Wheway Watson settled, and some of the women got increases amounting to £13, taking in the £6 limit.

## Wrenching Rises

Rises of a similar order were wrenched from the management at the third strike-bound company, Magnetic and Electrical Alloys, a Hamilton factory, part of the BICC

complex which TASS had fought for a national pay structure.

But MEA remained an anomaly in BICC. Within the plant, arbitrary differentials between the 60-odd staff involved always met with a stock company explanation: "Ah, you're just an anomaly."

A labyrinth of rates and job descriptions swamped the grading structure, and typically enough there were differentials of about £10 between men and women doing the same work.

"In many companies there can be no real movement for women if the grades are not restructured," said one of the strike leaders, Stan Martin.

It was precisely this target that TASS tackled first at General Motors' two factories in Peterhead and Newhouse in negotiations affecting 200 women, from confidential secretaries, to computer workers and a whole range of clerical workers.

The bottom two grades, according to TASS Scottish organiser Norrie McIntosh, who helped negotiate the deal, "were populated by females, the lowest paid. They were open to men — but there were no men in these grades."

"So we simply said the grading scheme was discriminatory." In disbelief, the management of the American-owned multinational, the world's biggest private employer, turned to its lawyers. And they confirmed the union's argument. Executive secretaries are now on about £70 and at the bottom of the scale clerkesses are on nearly £54. □

Beatrix Campbell



# NEWS

## BATTERING— STATE PAYS PROFESSORS

"The April 1976 conference of the National Women's Aid Federation held in York calls for the support of the Women's Liberation movement in principle and in practice for Women's Aid refuges both nationally and on a local basis, with particular regard to the 5th Aim of the National Federation. The National Women's Aid Federation supports the Women's Liberation movement and all its aims."

The above resolution, passed at the close of the NAWF conference on April 11-12, is a fair indication of the tone of the whole proceedings. It marks the end of the long debate over the 'nature' of the Federation,

and re-inforces the aforementioned "5th Aim", viz, "to educate and inform the public, the media, the police, the courts, social services and other authorities with respect to the battering of women, mindful of the fact that this is a result of the general position of women in our society."

### Studying battering

A similar tone of militancy pervaded the proceedings as a whole. There were angry reports that the DHSS, whilst originally refusing, and even now only "considering" a grant of £5,000 p.a. for the employment of an NAWF Information and Evaluation Officer, has liberally handed over £75,000 in research grants to university professors. Where, the Federation asked itself, are the statistics for these all-male projects to come from, if not from our refuges?

Are we to co-operatively hand over information about the women in our refuges so that it can be used for the formulation of more Gayfordesque sexual stereotyping? Should we not rather be given the facilities, and the finance, to conduct this research ourselves?

### Poor old Policemen

We note, incidentally, that the Police Federation has objected to Clause 2 of Jo Richardson's Domestic Violence Bill, which asks for the power of arrest to be attached to injunctions, on the grounds that they already have too much work on their hands. Interesting, in view of their current Police Powers Bill, which will give them far more to do . . . □

Stephanie Markman

In the latest Urban Aid phase, announced April 17, Cardiff Women's Aid got £4,008 for a worker, and five local authorities got capital grants to set up refuges in Wales.

## Whose Benefit?

From July 5 a £7.90 a week benefit will be paid to men and single women who can't go out to work because they're looking after invalid relatives. Not to married women though — they're assumed to be at home caring for their families anyway.

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## LESBIAN MOTHERS UNITE

On March 27 forty women attended a symposium on women alone, held at London University and organised by Action for Lesbian Parents, a group campaigning to break down prejudice against gay and feminist parents.

It is virtually impossible for a lesbian mother to retain custody of her children if the father contests it. Before the law, her sexual orientation is sufficient to prove she is an unfit mother.

With a barrister, Sadie Roberts, we discussed the very depressing legal picture and the best ways of fighting cases. She stressed the importance of having sympathetic social workers and character witnesses, and recommended helpful organisations.

Isolation and ignorance, insecurity and guilt — major problems for women in this situation — were discussed with representatives from two gay counselling organisations and the National Council for One Parent Families.

Women were advised to stay out of court if at all possible, since no cases have yet been won by lesbian mothers. Custody is always awarded to the father, even though the children are then often looked after by relatives or a succession of substitute mothers. In some cases mothers have been refused

John Silkin MP, Minister for Planning and Local Government, refuses to answer letters signed "Ms". Perhaps we should all write to him?

permission to visit their children.

Cases have been won in America, and we may have a successful precedent here within the next few months. As a step towards changing people's attitudes, we need research on homosexual families. This can be used to combat judges' prejudices and negative myths about lesbians. ALP is organising such a study and needs help (in particular from a clinical or developmental psychologist). Contact ALP at 52 Maids Causeway, Cambridge.

★ Spare Rib is preparing a report on lesbian custody cases. contact Eleanor Stephens at Spare Rib. □

## PORN NOT THERAPY

Publishers can no longer claim that alleged obscene material is therapeutic for the sexually repressed or perverted because it encourages masturbation or masturbatory fantasies.

An Appeal Court ruling made on March 24 means that the defence can no longer call expert witnesses to argue that the publication is for "the public good". □

Police smashed up a women's sit-in in Thailand at the end of March.

Last November the Hara clothing company in Bangkok closed one factory of 300 workers, sacked 120 from their other factory and cut wages to 70p a day.

Women picketed in protest, and management turned 30 hired thugs on them. So they occupied the factory, renamed it the Labour Union factory, and started to run it under workers' control. Five months later the police moved in. □



## Carlisle: A staff nursery for a psychiatric hospital?



*Caterina Barnes trained as a nursery teacher in Holland and has worked for many years as a state enrolled nurse in a psychiatric hospital in Carlisle. Shift work makes it hard for married women to get out to work, but a recent proposal for a nursery connected to the hospital met a lot of opposition, she reports.*

Some time ago a group of State Enrolled Nurses at the psychiatric hospital where I work came to see me because a popular young sister was leaving work — she was pregnant.

We talked about the problem of qualified female staff leaving so often — something we have lived with for a long time. Twenty years ago, when women of my age started working part-time in the hospital as nursing assistants, the female side always depended on part-time untrained staff. Pay and conditions were so bad that the few who did qualify left as soon as they could.

Any man with O levels could go into training, but a woman couldn't — one week you worked 56 hours, the next 48, so no housewife could do the work. Only married women badly in need of a job and living fairly nearby stuck it out — asylums were always built outside the towns but the population would grow — often over the years carrying inexperienced or new sisters and charge nurses.

### Man in Charge?

The real reason the group came to see me, as the secretary of the joint staff side of the joint consultative committee, was that they were worried a man would be put in charge of their geriatric ward.

Management policy in the past has aimed at hanging on to ambitious, energetic young men, and giving them promotion as early as possible. So, in our hospital, top management includes 16 men and one woman, middle management is about 50 men and eight women. And yet women working in the hospital outnumber men by three to one.

The general feeling in the geriatric wards is "Put a man in charge and you'll need an extra pair of hands, too." After looking into the figures we found that many good women were working two nights a week in positions well below their capacity. So, I suggested to the group that what we needed was a day nursery connected to the hospital, working the same shifts as the nurses.

### Beating the Politicians

Apart from myself, a cadet and a student working in the holidays, there are six women in my department — and three of them are single parents. The complicated system some of them have to work out to get their kids looked after would beat any pragmatic politician...

One morning to her mother, two to her father, two mornings with a neighbour; one afternoon to her mother, another to her father, two to a neighbour who takes her to a playgroup, one to another neighbour. And every week these sessions have to be reviewed and altered.

We all agreed that a nursery would be an enormous asset, with the knowledge that if anything went wrong with a child the parent would be on hand.

At the next meeting of the joint consultative committee — this time last year — I brought forward the proposal for a staff children's nursery. It met a stone wall. We were told that we were a caring profession, and which nurse would ever dream of bringing a baby or toddler to work? This senior nursing officer had us nearly in tears about doing such things to poor little kiddies.

So, we pointed out what really happened. Still, we were told it was definitely out — there was no shortage of qualified staff, no recruitment problem, no difficulty getting students with A levels. Furthermore, the hospital group secretary told us the hospital could not afford to spend £40,000 on a building we did not need.

A young male technician joined in, pointing out that many first class staff were lost, the arguments against nursery care were old-fashioned, and the cost could be cut by using one of the existing buildings — a social club already in use by hospital staff.

It was then the men began to come in to defend the proposal — to no avail. The senior nursing officer insisted that no one wanted it.

### Only 27 Against

However, the staff side decided to hold a sort of referendum among the workers — nurses, gardeners, plumbers and cooks.

Only 27 out of 300 voted against. About a dozen women sincerely believed that the grounds of a psychiatric hospital were not suitable for small children — even though there have always been staff houses for families on the estate.

Ultimately the proposal had to be taken up, but the tripartite committee representing staff and management made it clear that when the proposal came up on the Area Health Authority they would oppose it.

Meanwhile our branch of the Confederation of Health Service Employees agreed to urge Carlisle Trades Council to demand a nursery in the area surrounding the hospital, Harraby — the biggest working class district in the city. With a population of nearly 80,000 this city has only one council nursery, catering for 50 children.

The Trades Council is comprised mainly of older trade unionists and local councillors. One councillor felt the proposal was preposterous. Carlisle was "second to none in providing nursery places..." Another believed that if the workers wanted a nursery then they should ask the hospital to provide it.

We were asking for a nursery as close as possible to the hospital, financed by the council. I warned him about the parallel with tied cottages and factory nurseries — where a factory manager can put conditions on a woman in return for a nursery place — and he accepted the argument. He moved that the Trades Council write to the Social Services Department.

### Like Lightning

The Social Services responded like lightning. At the next meeting the assistant head of the SS addressed us. A very sleek, bland man, he spoke for 40 minutes on the work of the department — not a word about shortcomings and gaps and failures. No mention of nurseries.

Yes, but what about the proposal? "Ah", he said. "Well, maybe I'm old fashioned" — expressed so smugly you would think it a virtue. Babies ought to be with their mothers, he added.

It was then that the Trades Council rose to the occasion and gave him a hard time. Finally he promised that there could be provision for 20 places, with a trained children's worker, in a new community centre being built in the district.

We haven't got those places yet, but we were very lucky. With the cuts, the situation for social clubs and community centres is getting much worse. The only way we would have got a day nursery there and then would be if employment was so bad that management was really screaming out for staff. Still, we were able to emphasise that the social club was there, and there to be used. □

### WHO MADE THAT POSTER?

We are getting together a guide to women's posters for publication in *Spare Rib*. If you know of any posters which should be included, please send information to Poster Guide, *Spare Rib*, 9 Newburgh Street, London W1A 4XS.



# ABORTION NEWS

## BOYCOTT NO OFFENCE

The privileges committee has decided that there is "no case" against the National Abortion Campaign.

To show support for the six MPs who resigned in protest from the Select Committee, reconvened to consider further restrictions on the abortion law, NAC had refused to give evidence to what was left of the Select Committee. 16 other organisations followed suit.

Anti-abortion committee member Sir Bernard Braine immediately referred NAC's quoted comments (e.g. "We hope to discredit the illusion of a fair Select Committee. There is no way that this committee can look at our evidence logically and fairly." —*The Times*) to the privileges committee as contempt of Parliament. He said: "In all the years I have been a member I cannot recall a more serious and blatant attempt to frustrate the members of this House in carrying out the onerous duties assigned to them by the majority of their colleagues."

But the privileges committee ruled that NAC's defiance did not flout Parliament's authority: "Any person approached on an informal basis to give evidence to a select committee is free to decline such an invitation."

If the abortion committee had made formal use of its power, it might have been different. So perhaps they'll start issuing summonses instead.

## India: Millions Sterilised

The government of Maharashtra in western India is to be the first to introduce compulsory sterilisation for parents of three children.

The resolution was passed almost unanimously in the State Assembly at the end of March — only the leader of the Moslem League opposed it, saying that the whole contraceptive programme went against the teachings of Islam, and any attempt at compulsion would be interference with their religion.

He managed to get the Bill referred to a select committee, so it can't be enacted till July,



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

LONDON: Over 12,000 women, men and children marched on April 3, supporting a woman's right to choose whether she needs an abortion or not, and protesting against the reconvening of the Select Committee.

NAC groups, women's liberation, other women's organisations, many trade unions (including 12 NALGO banners, 9 NATFHE, 6 ASTMS), 15 trades councils, student organisations, the Labour Party and most left groups were represented on the demonstration.

At the rally afterwards in Trafalgar Square, Frankie Armstrong sang and Broadside did a play about a woman who didn't want to be pregnant: "You are going to be a lovely little mother, going to make a hunk of factory fodder."

The one million abortions since 1967 meant that the women involved were no longer victims of circumstance, said Dr Sheila Abdullah. Unless the TUC and Labour Party acted on their pro-abortion resolutions "then even the limited provisions of the 1967 Act will be whisked away from under our noses."

Scarisbrick, speaking for the anti-abortion organisation Life, told the Select Committee recently that abortion "will cause a population crisis" if it goes on much longer. It's not just a case of "murder" but of "national suicide"!

### Liverpool

WEDNESDAY, 19 MAY — 8 pm  
WOMEN'S STRUGGLES IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL  
—SPEAKERS FROM SPAIN AND PORTUGAL.  
CHAIR: SHEILA ABDULLAH.

but the Government is confident it will then go ahead.

An estimated 2.2 million will be sterilised in the first two years; after that, about 400,000 a year. The State now has a population of about 50 million.

2.8 million had already been sterilised by persuasion, but the authorities feel that's not enough. Four thousand doctors and 8,000 nurses are doing a three-month training course.

Vasectomies on men will be done when possible, because the operation is quicker and easier. Tubectomies on women will be done "as a last resort".

ROME: 30,000 women marched on April 3 in protest against an anti-abortion vote in parliament — Christian Democrats and the neo-Fascist Italian Social Party voted to limit legal abortion to cases of rape or where the woman's health was in great danger.

Abortion has brought Italy close to a referendum, demanded by feminists, and a general election — both of which all parties, including the Communists, wish to avoid.

Most tubectomies will be done abdominally, as State doctors are more used to those than vaginal operations.

Objectors have no right of appeal. Resistance is punishable by £25 fine or two years' jail, or both. The Government proposes the power to sterilise a dissenter during imprisonment. □

**END IMPERIALIST  
— OCCUPATION  
OF OUR BODIES!**

## What the papers didn't say...

The millions of women who weren't on the march would never have known it had happened.

Nothing on the television. The Press Association — to which British radio, TV and newspapers subscribe — sent a reporter. But, said news editor Peter Freeman, "Neither her copy, nor the NAC press release, was suitable. It was not newsworthy."

So they released nothing. And no, Freeman will not be reassessing his criteria of "newsworthiness". Was he aware of widespread reporting of the abortion demo in Rome that same day? "Well, Rome — that's Reuter's country, not ours..."

But wouldn't the big papers send their own reporters anyway? *The Sunday Times*: "As far as we can remember, no, we don't think we did." They certainly didn't print anything. A change in priorities, as last summer they carried a 1,000 word lead article opposing James White's Bill.

*The Times* relies on the Press Association for Saturday events. *The Sunday Express* sent a reporter but printed nothing — "it's all those male chauvinist Scotsmen in editorial", they chuckled. Not a word in *The People* or the *News of the World*. *The Sunday Mirror* managed five lines, and *The Observer* and *Sunday Telegraph* rather more. Then, if you hung on till Monday there was the *Morning Star*, and *The Guardian*. □



# 'LIFE' AT SCHOOL

*Anti-abortionists are eager to get into schools to speak.*

*Rebecca Marshall, a teacher, describes a talk given by Dr Keating of 'Life' to the sixth-form at Cavendish School, Hemel Hempstead, during their weekly discussion after-noon:*

Dr Keating was invited by the head of the sixth-form. However, the head was anxious to gain a balanced view and asked me to invite speakers from NAC. Attendance is compulsory, although I believe that people who found the topic disturbing would have been excused.

Dr Keating presented an extremely one-sided view. As he was talking to young women between 16 and 18 years old, I think this was very dangerous.

He used obscure and slightly suspect statistics, with highly emotive language and pictures. His statistics were carefully arranged: he stated that in Hungary abortion had been banned because it proved harmful to the woman. (While this is often the official reason, it is common knowledge that the Eastern bloc has a population problem and needs more manpower — *this is the reason behind the ban.*)

## Sensationalism

His language aimed to present a picture of abortion as a totally disgusting and inhuman act. He used words like "barbaric", "cruel", "brutal", "slaughter", and phrases like "torn limb from limb".

But the most disturbing aspect of his talk were his slides, projected onto a large screen in full colour. He showed pictures of aborted foetuses — one "torn limb from limb" in a pool of bloody waste. He also showed a picture of a plastic bucket filled with aborted foetuses (in black and white this time) and said, "This is the result of a morning's work at a clinic."

I can only believe that in this display of sickening and disgusting photographs his aim was to fill young people with fear and disgust at the *thought*

of abortion — the very people who might well need abortions. He left some of the pictures up on the screen for several minutes while he continued talking.

Such pictures could affect young people's rational judgement — after all, if you show six-year-old children pictures of a tooth being pulled out or tonsils being removed, they would probably never go near a dentist or hospital again!

I believe that these pictures used in this context could sway people *emotionally* into the anti-abortion field, and that they should not be permitted to be shown. They had little relevance to his argument.

Talks of this kind could have a very harmful effect. They *must* be backed up or preceded by a pro-abortion talk so that both sides of the argument can be seen. Unfortunately, I don't suppose that always happens.

## Student Response

Dr Keating had an interesting effect on our sixth-form. The girls were disgusted and angry that this man, who was not even a gynaecologist, should be trying to decide their future. But the boys were convinced by him to a large extent. The boys seemed to find the pictures more disturbing.

Thus Dr Keating is busy breeding another generation of male anti-abortionists and female pro-abortionists — which is sad, because it's about time men started sympathising with women, not fighting against them. Dr Keating did nothing to help men understand women's feelings about an unwanted pregnancy. In fact in his whole talk he carefully avoided the question of women and their feelings altogether.

## "Not fanatics"

Two months later, on March 25, two women from NAC came to speak at the school. Sixth-formers were surprised



## Why were THEY allowed to march?

The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child marched through Liverpool on March 27 as part of their "Witness One Million" week.

Women's groups that support abortion are still banned from the streets of Liverpool by the majority-Liberal City Council.

Organisations including SPUC, Life, the Catholic Women's League and the Festival of Light supported a "week of penance and prayer" in "commemoration" of the million foetuses "killed" since the passing of the 1967 Act. They aim to abolish the Act and make all abortion a criminal offence once again.

that they were not "fanatical" or "emotional" as the Life speaker had been. Many were surprised to find that NAC wasn't advocating that every pregnant woman should have an abortion.

Students asked if free abortion wouldn't encourage promiscuity, why the speakers hadn't come to talk about contraception, whether there should be abortion facilities in schools. The head asked, "as a man", what they thought the father's rights were if a girl got pregnant.

Most people thought the session useful, especially in the wake of Dr Keating. NAC was less controversial than they'd thought. □

LEAMINGTON SPA: On March 27, NAC supporters confronted 200 anti-abortionists from SPUC and Life who had arranged an outdoor rally and a silent march.

NAC leafletted people passing by the rally, urging them not to join the march. When the marchers reached their target, the Blackdown clinic, run by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, women and men from NAC who had gone on ahead were waiting for them at the gates, greeting them with loud-hailers and placards.

A solitary bagpiper and a local bishop in prayer were drowned by the demands of women for the right to control their own lives.

## ABORTION AT A PRICE

Leicester NAC got a lot of publicity lately, locally and nationally, when they published a research pamphlet, *Abortion in Leicester Now*.

More than half the women seeking abortions in Leicester-shire in 1973 had to pay to have them outside the area.

Of 1,625 legal abortions performed on Leicester residents that year, only 18% were

on the NHS in the area, while 56% were performed privately elsewhere. In Northumberland in the same year, 92% were in the area on the NHS.

Why such a variation? Partly because of local facilities — in Leicester grossly inadequate, as the Area Health Officer, Dr Alan Buchan, was one of the first to point out: "Our facilities are such that we cannot provide a fully comprehensive service. We are short in all areas because the amount spent in Leicestershire per head

of population is the lowest in the country."

And partly because of the anti-abortion attitudes of local gynaecologists. John MacVicar, professor of gynaecology and obstetrics at Leicester University and an honorary consultant at the hospital, said: "I don't think the fact that I am a founder member of SPUC has made obtaining an abortion any more difficult."

The pamphlet is available from 37 Cecil Rd., Leicester, for 10p plus postage.



# SHORTLIST

Please send information to Anny Brackx, Shortlist Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St., London W1A 4XS.

## events

Events are listed chronologically

### Women's Disco

On May 15, and every third Saturday after that, there will be a women's disco at the Marlborough Hotel, Princess St., Brighton, from 8 to 12pm.

### Patriarchy

A conference on patriarchy has been planned for May 15/16 at the Architectural Association, Bedford Square, London WC1, for women only. The term patriarchy, in current use in the women's movement, refers to both psychoanalysis and Marxism, and needs clarifying. For information and registration send a sae to Elisabeth, 4 Marlborough Rd., London W5. Creche available.

### Sexual Radicals?

The relationship between the women's movement, gay liberation and Men against Sexism will be discussed in a conference on May 15/16 at Goldsmith's College, New Cross, London SE14. 'Towards a Social Movement - how long before we are liberated?' is the theme. There will be a creche, crashpads and refreshments (but bring a sleeping bag and food). Registration fee is 50p per day and if you want to know more contact V. Phillips or K. Copp Brown, Institute of Education, Malet St., London WC1 (01-636 1895).

### Swinging Sappho

The Sappho women only discos on May 15 and 29 and June 12 will be at the Sols Arms, Hampstead Rd., London NW1. Entrance fee is 50p. Sappho can be contacted at 39 Wardour St., London W1V 3HA (01-434 1801).

### Towards a Red Asia

The Asian Socialist Forum are proposing a lecture on the oppression of women on May 16 as part of their educational programme. Contact (01-328 2332) for details.

### Gay Workers

Gay social workers and probation officers are meeting together with the gay medics on May 17 at 8pm at the University of London Students Union, Malet St., London WC1.

### Abortion

The Sheffield branch of the National Abortion Campaign will meet on May 19 and on alternate Wednesdays (7.30pm) after that, at the Lion, Nursery St., Sheffield. Contact Liz or Jennie (Sheff. 331304).

### The New Laws

There will be a day-school on women's rights: the new laws, how to use them and what you and your union can do for equal rights. Trades Union and NCCL speakers. At the Nottingham Teacher's Centre, Cranmer St., Nottingham on May 22, 10.30am to 5pm.

Contact Tina Pamplin, 4 Melrose Avenue, Sherwood, Nottingham (0602-601588) for registration (75p and 40p if you're unemployed).

### Women's Aid

The regional meeting of all Midlands Women's Aid groups is to be held on May 22 in Stafford. Contact Marguerite Valentine, 69 Newport Rd., Stafford (Staff. 53441) for details.

### Gays and Unions

A conference organised by the London Gay Teachers Group at the University of London Union, Malet St., London WC1, for May 26 starting at 7.30pm.

### Women's Cinema

*Intimate Confessions of a Chinese Courtesan* will be shown on May 26 and *Seven Women* with Ann Bancroft on June 9. 8pm at London International Film School, Shelton St., London WC2. Women only, membership £1 and entrance 50p. Phone to confirm or for more information about the Women's Cinema (01-960 2723).

### History Workshop

At Ruskin College, Oxford on May 29/30. The theme is 'Workers' Education & Class Consciousness' including sessions on Owenism and feminism, workers' education on Clydeside, education and class-consciousness in Britain and Europe. There will be a creche. Tickets cost £2 (OAPs 50p) from History Workshop, Ruskin College, Walton St., Oxford.



### Sexist Language

Women's Research and Resources Centre seminar on 'Sex-roles and Sexism in Language', introduced by Gwen Awbery. On June 4, 7.30pm at WRRRC, 158 North Gower St., London NW1 (01-388 0882).

### Handicapped People

'Sexual Needs of Handicapped Young People' is the theme of a conference on June 7 at the Royal College of Surgeons, 35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2. "The conference will examine ways in which this subject can be better understood so that the situation can be improved." The conference fee is £5.80 inclusive of coffee, lunch and tea. Enquiries to the Conference Secretary, 3 Totternhoe Close, Kenton, Middx (01-907 3024 and 01-730 9891).

### No Place to Play?

The lack of spaces and facilities for play is the theme of Playday '76 on June 19. Local and national organisations concerned with children will put on festivals, meetings, exhibitions to draw the attention of local authorities. Contact John Roberts, Fair Play for Children Campaign, 237 Pentonville Rd., London N1 (01-278 5314) for help.

### Women's Week

From July 9 to 16 there will be a women's week at Laurieston Hall, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland. If you feel like going, write what workshops, theoretical or practical, you want and what skills you can offer. All work will be shared and the cost will be £2.25 per person; children half-price; babies free.

### European Conference

Women in the French movement have put out a call for a European Women's Conference in October on the theme of 'Women in Class Struggle - Women in Revolutionary Struggle'. Discussions will centre around women's major struggles and the development of the feminist movement in each country. "It is hoped... some progress will be made towards understanding and perhaps coping with some of the difficulties we often face in relating, both theoretically and practically, to the class struggle on the one hand, and to the mass of the women's liberation movement on the other, in our respective countries." If you want to go to future planning meetings contact Barbara Yates at 20B Batoum Gardens, London W6.

## campaigns

### Claim for Heating

The National Council for One Parent Families and Gingerbread have published a very readable leaflet recommending lone parents on supplementary benefit, to claim their heating allowance now. It tells you, step by step, how to claim it, how to appeal if they won't give you the allowance and who to go to for support. The leaflet is free to lone parents. Single copies will be sent to others for 15p in stamps; bulk order prices on application. Write to the NCOPF, 255 Kentish Town Rd., London NW5 2LX or Gingerbread, 9 Poland St., London W1V 3DG.

### Abortion

American sisters have produced a pamphlet giving directions on how to do a non-traumatic abortion. This information is available from New Moon Communications Inc., Box 3488, Ridgeway Station, Stamford, Conn. 06905, USA. Single copies \$1; six copies for \$10.

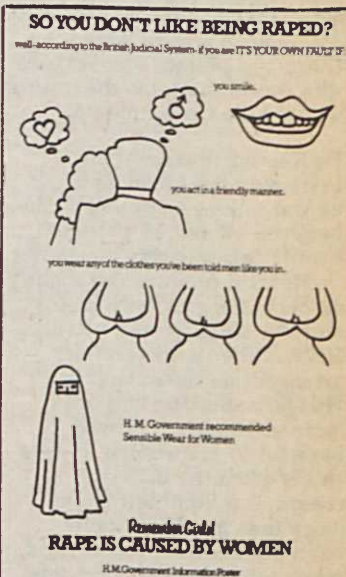
*The Choice Is Yours* is a new West London Theatre Workshop play. The group prefer to perform for 'unconverted audiences'. Book well in advance (01-969 2292).

Local newsheets and pamphlets are now available in Leicester and West London. *Abortion In Leicester Now* has sections on the '67 act, abortion in Leicester: case histories, statistics, doctors' attitudes and available alternatives. It concludes with a piece on the campaign. Available from Leicester National Abortion Campaign, 37 Cecil Rd., Highfields, Leicester (Leic. 50340), at 10p + postage. The *West London Newsheet* gives an account of the local campaign for quick and safe abortions around four hospitals and explains women's rights under the present laws. 2p + postage from Louise Cripps, 11 Acklam Rd., London W10.

## services

### Rape Crisis Centre: CORRECTION

Last month we gave the wrong office number. It should be 01-340 6913.



Poster produced by Lezzo Studios, available from LS c/o Rough Trade, 202 Kensington Pk. Rd., W11

## centres

### Spanish Centre

Open Monday to Friday from 5pm; Saturdays from 3pm and Sundays from noon. This centre has a nursery, English classes, puts on films and plays. Soon Spanish-speaking women will be able to use it as an information centre. 13 Acklam Rd., London W10.

### Camden

"We are trying to open a centre and are looking for suitable premises, preferably a shopfront, in a central position. Any suggestions or offers, please ring Terry (01-722 9391). Project meetings take place every Thursday 6-8pm at 53 Antrim Mansions, Antrim Rd., London NW3."





THE SUNDAY TIMES IS CONCERN



When was the last time a man said you had a great pair of jeans?

Adjacent hoardings photographed for 'The Politics of Photography' in the first issue of *Camerawork*.

## plays

### Feminist Drama

Political theatre – feminist drama – working collectively – creating plays . . . If anybody feels like being part of a women's theatre workshop, write to Mila Caley, c/o 21D Powis Square, London W11.

## art

### Postal Event

"For the past year I have been sending visual messages to friends. Mostly these are women who have had art training but are unable to do any artwork . . . because of domestic responsibilities, children, funny husbands, etc." 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman', an exhibition of a postal event, can be seen in Manchester until May 14, North West Arts Gallery, King St., Manchester 2, and in Birmingham from June 1 to 30, Arts Lab, Tower St., Newtown, Birmingham 19.

## pamphlets

### Counter Course

This 'critical reading guide' arose from the discussions of a group of Manchester social work students. It lists a wide range of books, pamphlets and articles under 15 headings (social administration – whose history, medicine and health, housing, etc) and reviews them briefly. The collective hope it will be "one element in the process of 'political self-education' that may give rise to critiques of social work"; as Peter Jenkins says in his introduction "a socialist critique of social work is long overdue".

The introduction also gives a summary of the political trends that are influencing social workers and criticises social work courses that add to the whole process of mystification: "We learn that the control of rents in the field of private housing goes back to the First World War, but not of the massive, popular rent strike and the threat of a red Clydeside which actually made it imperative for the government to introduce it."

The guide was put together by five men; the majority of social work students are women, so why

aren't any involved in this project? *Counter Course – Social Work and the Welfare State*, A Critical Reading Guide, is available at 20p + postage from Scanus, 3 Endsleigh St., London WC1H 0DU (01-387 1277).

Barbara Charles

### The Sex Discrimination Act and the Struggle for Women's Rights

Both the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act were offered in the same package as the Social Contract and the £6 pay limit, says a new Socialist Woman pamphlet, "policies that represent a direct attack on the working class". This clear outline of the limitations of the SDA – fortunately avoiding the familiar conspiracy theory: 'nothing but a government con', 'a meaningless sop' etc. – looks for the origins of the Labour Government's anti-discrimination legislation in the ILO Convention on Equal Pay and the 'enlightened management' objectives of draft legislation after the Second World War. But it takes a revolutionary left organisation, in this case the International Marxist Group, to say "We are preparing for a society where we actually have control over our own fertility, sexuality and ultimately every aspect of our lives", and then add, as though we haven't already got the message: "and the lives of the working class as a whole."

15p plus postage from 97 Caleonian Road, London N1.

Ann Scott

### Abortion – Where We Stand

*Abortion – Where We Stand* explains the National Abortion Campaign's case for safe, free abortion on demand. Amazingly, it's seven short pieces – each 1,000 words or less – avoid dogmatic or patronising language: the anti-abortion positions on respect for life and foetal viability are taken seriously and the current techniques of abortion simply described.

One reservation only. Why is the most important piece – locating abortion within our varied movement for liberation, not only equal rights – printed at the end, with the feel of a postscript? As the pamphlet's most explicit political statement, it would have been much more effective at the beginning.

But the meaning of collective strength comes through clearly: "The decision to have an abortion is often a lonely one. The decision

to join a campaign to defend the right to have an abortion is one that will be taken together with thousands of people."

15p plus postage from 30 Camden Rd., London NW1, with donations to NAC's Pamphlet Project if possible – the aim is to produce more literature for High Streets, housing estates and factories.

A.S.

### Cosmic Mother

Monica Sjo's visionary account of cosmic mother worship does not fit in with the scientific academic tradition. She was motivated by her "own woman experiences and trying to understand the connection between these and ancient women's religious conceptions". Myths and remains of old customs are the guide to her intuitions, illuminating the link between woman's cyclic body transformations and cosmic energy: woman the procreator; woman the transformer of matter – clay into pots, herbs into medicine, grain into bread; woman who thanked the mother goddess while creating human civilisation.

If Elisabeth Gould Davies' *First Sex* or Graves' *White Goddess* stirred you, then you will like Monica Sjo's writing. I find her language however, sometimes surprisingly prosaic.

*The Ancient Religion of the Great Cosmic Mother of All* is available from Sophie Laws, 25 Anderton Park Rd., Moseley, Birmingham 13, at 15p + postage.

## journals & articles

### Camerawork

A journal about photography, whose central concern is not "Is it art?" but "Who is it for?". Which wants to expose the politics of image and colour supplement cynicism. Which aims to educate photographers in technological self-reliance. Whose first issue looks critically at photography training, the dictatorial habits of photo editors, and the artifice of fashion photography. A journal like *Camerawork* could be particularly important for women, so often manipulated as fantasy. Women could describe what it's like to be reduced to a smile or a pair of tights, day after day, tube after tube. Where a woman with a baby, a bedspread and a pussy

cat means 'The Sunday Times is Concern'. Where groups of women are beginning to photograph themselves and could show other women the difference. Even John Berger aint a woman.

20p plus postage from Camera-work, Half Moon Photography Workshop, 27 Alie St., London E1. Women photographers are urged to get in touch.

A.S.

### Labour Research

The White Paper on Public Expenditure, published on February 19, plans a three year freeze in overall public spending. The April issue of *Labour Research* gives a statistical rundown of how the services will be affected and the impact nil growth in public spending will have on employment. A well-researched article on childcare provisions for the under-fives shows that plans for the expansion of nursery education are always the first to be dropped or reduced. It is estimated that by 1980 only four fifths of the 1972 policy target (nursery education for 90% of four year olds and for 50% of three year olds) will be met, which means a continuation of the care problem of millions of working women. The journal also contains an up to date review of the

## Kids are a full-time job?

No-but they can stop you getting one.



## Join the fight for More Nurseries

Poster by the Working Women's Charter Group, 11 Callerton Place, Newcastle.

maternity leave situation. It lists unions and the model agreements they recommend as well as companies, indicating existing schemes of paid or unpaid maternity leave.

*Labour Research* No 4, April 1976. Available from 78 Blackfriars Rd., London SE1 8HF (01-928 3649) at 25p per single copy.



## Signs

*Signs*, Journal of Women in Culture and Society, shows all the attributes to succeed in the professional world of academics, with its advisory and editorial boards from 25 US universities and its correspondents in nine capitalist countries. The editors "want *Signs* to represent the originality and rigor of the new thinking about women, sexuality, sex roles, the social institutions in which the sexes have participated, the culture men and women have inherited, inhabited and created". Power is the theme of the first issue. Articles range from the bourgeois historical 'Queen Elizabeth I: Parliamentary Rhetoric and the exercise of Power' to a clarifying essay on the Chinese revolution, marriage law and changing attitudes towards the family in China. Under the heading 'The New Scholarship: Review Essays in the Social Sciences' women scientists report on the research done on women, in the various disciplines. "We are in the exciting predicament of trying to explain women in society at the same time as we strive to improve conditions for women in society". The journal also contains some unpublished historical documents. Fascinating reading was the piece of research on affectionate friendships and supportive networks among 19th century American women. It explores "the social structure and the world view which made intense and sometimes sensual female love both a possible and an acceptable emotional option".

*Signs*, Autumn 1975, Vol 1, No 1. Single copies cost \$3.60 from The University of Chicago Press, 5801 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

## Prime Time

"There are more than 30 million women over 45 in the United States — more than a sixth of the



From *Prime Time* No 5, Oct 75.

entire population", and *Prime Time* writes for them. *Prime Time* fights ageism with defiance, humour and honesty. On 'motherism':

"It's been unfashionable and neurotic... to try and remain an integral part of one's adult children's lives." Or: "Cancer has been the subject of an enormous amount of consciousness-raising, but menopause has been virtually ignored." An appreciation of 'Complaints and Disorders', a long pamphlet on the professionalisation of American medicine and its consequences for women: "The more I read, the more I felt I was looking back into the 19th century through my mother's eyes." The excitement of memory has replaced the cool appraisal of the reviewer: Marjory Collins places her mother's history within the period the pamphlet describes. "My mother was born about 1880, little more than a decade after Darwin's theory of evolution had entered the public consciousness and at the peak of European immigration to the United States."

50c plus postage from 420 West 46th St., New York, NY 10036. Write for overseas subscription rates.

A.S.

## The Avon Rubber Co.

The Public Interest Research Centre (PIRC) asked 100 companies to cooperate with an inquiry, only Avon agreed, and this was due to the former managing director (MD). When they sent the draft report to the new MD he dissociated the management from it and refused to discuss it further. This issue of *Social Audit* is, therefore, more of an "accident" than a sign that capitalists are becoming 'socially responsible'.

PIRC collected their information in interviews with management, TU representatives and government agencies. The report seems thorough, with good sections on health and safety — carcinogens are used in the Avon Group though workers were told that no raw materials which might have any risk of cancer were in use. On the consumer side they found built-in obsolescence — the thickness of the tread on some tyres had been reduced.

The women workers at Avon earned substantially less than the men and filled the lowest paid jobs, PIRC do not believe that the Equal Pay Act will improve their situation greatly. Women got equal pay for 'identical work', though some of their jobs were "as difficult and as skilled as men's jobs." In one of the subsidiaries, employing mostly women, they took a broader view of 'equal pay' and introduced a job evaluation scheme. However, the women representatives accepted that women should get less pay and the scheme incorporated this view.

The writers hope that the report will lead to "a demand for more disclosures", but at £4.50 (90 pages) a copy it will stimulate only the usual elite. *Social Audit* Vol 2, Nos 3 & 4, Spring 1976, 9 Poland St., London WC1V 3DG. Discounts for Avon employees, pensioners and students. B.C.

# NEWS

## Prostitution in South Korea: "To Seoul to sell my body"

"The November morning in Seoul is cold, sometimes below the freezing point. Dozens of girls pull their coats tight as they enter the chill from the back entrance of a big hotel. Shortly thereafter, groups of Japanese men pour out of the hotel's front entrance, following their respective flags to awaiting sightseeing buses. It's been another typical night at a typical tourist hotel."

Akiko Yamaguchi of the National Christian Council Women's Committee in Japan is describing *kisaeng* tourism — government-licensed prostitution in South Korea. Her report appeared in the bi-monthly *Japan Christian Activity News* in 1973.

"The night probably began at one of Seoul's 14 major *kisaeng* (Korean-style *geisha*) houses, where the Japanese man paid roughly \$100 to be fed, entertained and slept with. The *kisaeng* herself ends up with about \$10 — the rest goes to the house, the hotel (usually Japanese-owned) and the travel agent. In a good year, the *kisaeng* can earn as much as what eight of the tourists spent on their one-week trip — over \$3,000. But she ages quickly and looks 40 when she's only 30."

Prostitution is indispensable to the government of the Republic of Korea. Min Kwan-sik, minister of education in the repressive Park Chung Hee government, visited a South Korean High School in Tokyo in April 73 and made a speech to the school's board of directors and staff. As minister of education, he said, he was pleased that South Korean young women were making "devoted" efforts at home and overseas to acquire much-needed foreign exchange for the ROK's economic development.

But ministerial euphemism was followed by explicit abuse. Chung Kyungmo, estranged senior technical adviser to the ROK government and now resident in Japan, comments on Min's reference to the

"laudable patriotic sentiments" of the women who have "come to Japan and are working day and night selling their — for the nation":

"The ellipsis is an obscene Korean word that a thug would hesitate to use even in private company", Chung wrote, "but which Min thought appropriate for this public meeting. Min is notorious in the Korean community in Japan because of this incredible utterance."

"Incidentally", he continues, the South Korean young women sent to Japan "are issued with passports stamped with 'Artistic Delegation'. The ministry which certifies that the women are artists? — Minister Min Kwan-sik's Ministry of Education."

## Economy — Miracle or Nightmare?

South Korea's economic growth rate since the sixties has been exceptional among developing countries. An average annual increase in Gross National Product between 1962 and 1971 of 10% earned the country its name as "The Miracle of the River Han". But impressive figures conceal the imbalances in development.

The industrial structure of South Korea changed radically between 1962 and 1969 with a roughly 10% shift from agricultural to manufacturing production. As in many other developing countries, the neglect of agriculture has led to rural poverty, mass migration to the cities and the growth of urban slums. Private investors favour textiles and clothing, electronics, cars, pharmaceuticals, banking, insurance and tourism over agriculture, education or health care.

In 1969, 80% of all new firms were established in Seoul. The only other region of major industrial investment is the port-cities on the south-eastern coast, closest to Japan. They are also in President Park's home area and favoured in economic development in return for strong electoral support.





MATSUMOTO MICHIKO

The women's movement in Japan has begun to campaign against *kisaeng* tourism in South Korea. By doing educational and propaganda work within their own country they may expose some of the sexist assumptions which underpin Japanese men's abuse of young Korean women. Beliefs about female subservience and silence are deep in traditional Japanese culture.

Commercial foreign loans and private investments, both national and foreign, constitute 70 or 80% of total investment in South Korea and go into the profitable manufacturing industries. Meanwhile there are not enough schools, hospitals, public transport, roads, drinking water and electricity. This is particularly true of the rural areas, where half the population still lives. The heavy influx of foreign capital is also one of the causes of the country's permanent high inflation which, according to conservative government figures, runs at more than 10% annually.

In 1971, 58% of all foreign investment was American and 31% Japanese. But the Japanese exploitation of the South Korean economy is increasing. Investment projects which meet public resistance in Japan because of their pollution effects are welcome in the ROK. Japan also invests through Korean residents in Japan, 'Korean' companies

actually owned by Japanese, licence contracts and hidden loans. But the relationship acquired a sexual dimension with the tourist boom and its abuse of young Korean women.

AMPO, a quarterly Japan-Asia review, puts it this way: "The Japanese tourist boom, and the attendant surge in prostitution, is the most explicit example of Japan-ROK relations: impoverished Koreans being fucked over by money-laden Japanese. The ROK government, while it doesn't like the image, loves the revenue it brings: about \$200 million in badly needed foreign exchange in 1973 alone. Sex trips by all-male Japanese tour groups have proved such a success that much of Japan's investment in Korea in 1973 (about \$200 million) was for tourist hotels."

An issue of *Time* magazine in 1973 said that in Seoul alone there were 1,500 prostitutes licensed by the government to "entertain her guest

in his room". The article was reprinted in the *Han'guk ilbo*, a ROK newspaper, and captioned 'Complete Translation'. The line in the original that prostitution tourism was "backed at high government levels — including President Chung Hee Park" was omitted. "It appears the newspaper could not print the fact that the president is a pimp", comments Chung Kyungmo.

Slum Dwellers from the Land The ROK's "export first" policy and its attempt to attract foreign investors depend on a continued low wage level. Migration from the land in search of work in the cities continues unchecked, since it provides unlimited reserves of people willing to work for any wage. Government propaganda creates a vague but glamorous image of the city with "opportunities for everybody". The reality, for both men and women, is different.

A single girl from the countryside came to Seoul. She found work as a housemaid, first in a middle class family, later in a small inn. In neither place did she receive cash wages; her salary was free room and board for a 15-hour workday. She finally couldn't stand it any more and ran away. Some days later she found a private 'employment centre' which promised her a good job in a beer hall. After a few days of work, she was forced to serve as a prostitute. Because of her debts to the 'employment centre' she couldn't leave. A policeman to whom she tried to tell her story was paid off by the brothel owner.

Whole families may move to the cities if they don't have enough land to sustain themselves. The father might try to get occasional work as a porter. His wife works at home cracking nuts while looking after a young child. She works 12 hours to make 50 pence. The oldest son gets a bundle of neckties from a dealer and tries to sell them on the street. The daughter has a 'permanent' job in a small clothing workshop. She works 12-15 hours every day for £5 a month.

The reporters on the *Japan Christian Activity News* knew that "the *kisaeng* has an 'easy life' compared to thousands of young women who have migrated to Seoul looking for legitimate work. South Korea's glorified anti-communist, free enterprise system gives these women three basic choices: a 16-hour day in a textile factory or tea room, or earning twice as much during 10 hours

a night as a whore. The women are given totally free choice on how they want to be exploited."

The sexual abuse of young women is thus part of the pervasive degradation of the ROK labour force, male and female. Big companies, particularly if they depend on skilled workers, tend to offer more or less regular working conditions. But in the thousands of small and middle-size factories, which account for 98% of all industrial establishments, a working day of 10-12 hours with one short rest break is the rule and up to 18 hours is quite common. Many workers get no holidays except national holidays. Extra pay for overtime or night work, though prescribed by law, is an exception. Industrial accidents, due to the absence of safety precautions and overwork of the labourers, are frequent and increasing annually. Compensation pay, if given, is nominal. Assault, mistreatment of young workers, and sexual exploitation of female workers are common.

## Visiting the Bars

In 1973 Korean Church Women United demanded a "halt to sexual exploitation" and appealed to the Japan Women's Committee to act against the promoters of *kisaeng* tourism there. Some women visited bars and restaurants in Seoul to talk with the women. Others offered 'vocational training for less humiliating work', the *JCAN* reports. Meanwhile the NCC Japan was continuing its efforts to get travel agents in Japan to encourage cultural rather than sexual trips to Korea: 500,000 tourists visited the ROK in 1973, most of them unaccompanied men.

It's unlikely, however, that the Church Women's campaign has been able to continue open activities in Korea. The present Emergency Decrees by which the country is governed make it an offence punishable by an indeterminate sentence to oppose the regime in any way. Kim Chi Ha, a male rebel poet, was due to be executed — though the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment — for writing poems like this one expressing the *kisaeng*'s despair:

*I'm going to work  
Without crying  
Over the white, black and  
dry mountain passes  
With heavy steps, to Seoul  
to sell my body.*

Ann Scott

Thanks to Gavan McCormack, Leeds University, for the information.



# NEWS



## DEPO-PROVERA: STILL FOR SALE

Since writing her article on *Depo-provera* in *Spare Rib* 42, Jill Rakusen has been looking into the use of this contraceptive in Britain.

First of all, you may remember that two oral contraceptives were recently taken off the market. This provides a further disturbing twist to the DP story.

The progestagen in DP is derived from the same source as two other progestagens — both withdrawn after being implicated in breast cancer studies like those carried out on DP. One of these progestagens — megestrol acetate — is contained in the oral contraceptives Volidan 21 and Serial 28, taken off the market in January.

The Committee on Safety of Medicines has been cautious enough to withdraw megestrol acetate, but medroxyprogesterone acetate is still in use — in DP. And DP is not only suspect as far as breast cancer is concerned, it is also suspect in relation to cervical cancer.

Although the CSM has refused to license the drug as a contraceptive, DP is still very much on the market. In fact it's still recommended in *Mims*,

a monthly reference index of drugs sent free to doctors.

In the February issue, DP is shown as a treatment for threatened miscarriage and for endometriosis. In 1974 the American FDA decided that DP was ineffective for either of these problems and shouldn't be used to treat them. (DP can also cause virilization of female foetuses.) The FDA is still withholding approval for DP as a contraceptive.

### Waiting for Vasectomy

*Mims* also lists DP as a short-term contraceptive. The CSM has licensed DP for short-term use in two circumstances: when a couple is waiting for a vasectomy to be effective, or when a woman is being immunised against German measles and it is necessary to prevent pregnancy during the period of activity of the virus.

But whatever *Mims* or the CSM say, there is *nothing* to prevent doctors using drugs in *whatever way they choose*. As yet, *nobody* can question a doctor's 'clinical judgement'.

Of course, no doctor is going to prescribe a treatment which will patently kill the patient. But with drugs about which little is known the doctor may be uninformed.

Dr. David Delvin reports in *General Practitioner* (28 November 75) that the CSM's guidelines are already widely disregarded. Hundreds of women are being given DP, and some doctors have started using it on a longer term basis — "mainly for women for whom they're at their wits' end to find something that will stop them getting pregnant". One family planning doctor told me that DP is given "only in very special selected cases" — but again, these cases do not necessarily fit the CSM's criteria.

She gave as an example cases where the woman has had "great difficulty" with other methods, and assured me that

women are always informed that the drug is still being evaluated. But we cannot be sure of this. The listing in *Mims* gives no such indication. And Dr. Delvin's article in *GP* tends to concentrate on telling doctors they are free to prescribe whatever they like.

### Age is Not Mentioned

*Mims* does mention that there are times when DP should not be used. The data sheet lists them (manufacturers are required to produce data sheets for all drugs): when there is thrombophlebitis or related blood disorders, genital cancer or various liver problems. But age is not mentioned.

DP may cause permanent infertility. Since there has been little research on this issue, surely at the very least, young women should not take it — particularly if they have not yet been proved fertile?

**Uninformed—Underdeveloped** Women in underdeveloped countries were the first to be experimented on. In Britain doctors are likely to use DP when, as Dr Devlin says, "they are at their wits' end."

But most, if not all, of us are potential candidates — trained to leave doctors to make decisions for us, mystified and over-awed by medical practice and terminology. And doctors have the monopoly of information: most medical libraries are not open to the public, and at least one drug information service I've consulted has told me it exists only for medical personnel.

In this and other articles I've written for *Spare Rib*, I hope I've shown how we can begin to question doctors' attitudes and decisions — once we have information. Without it, we're stuck — we can't ask informed questions or get informed answers. With no power over our bodies we have no hope of power over our lives. □

**"PUPIL POWER":** The British Safety Council held a contest in April to crown "Miss Beautiful Eyes 1976" (not to mention the eye make-up). Their way of promoting eye safety in industry!

## Coloured Carpets

One person has already moved into Annie Besant House for single women coming out of Holloway Prison, and the house is ready for more to move in.

In *SR44* we reported that a group of women including May Hobbs and Helen Borrows were setting up the house to give single women somewhere to live while they sorted themselves out. As May explained: "There's five a day coming out of Holloway and maybe three of those have nowhere to go."

"We want to have up to ten in the house — we hate the word home — staying for a maximum of three months."

"It's all gone very well", says Helen, "and the house is almost finished, except the basement which still looks like a bomb's hit it. We're putting in showers and tiling it ourselves, but we're beginning to run into financial trouble over the alterations." The group are still expecting the GLC (who gave the house) to give the money they promised once the house was fitted out.

They also want more carpets and small things like lamps and lampshades, because as May said: "We want colour, we don't want the whole bloody place white like a nut-house." □

Jane Root

If you have anything to give, phone Helen 01-348 6304, or send money to help with the basement alterations to, c/o 2 St Paul's Rd., London N1.



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# NEWS

## GOING BACK TO THE BEGINNING

The gap between national campaigns, and the way we tend to organise for them, and informal local groups, was a main theme of the seventh national women's liberation conference in Newcastle on April 23-25.

How can we make national structures reflect local activity? How does our local campaigning reflect our personal and sexual politics? There was talk of "reclaiming" the campaigns into women's liberation, of expanding the demands and drawing out their implications, of the need to restate constantly and publicly the feminist content of the demands — so that we don't lose our energy and imagination in an effort to come over as "respectable" and get things done.

Must the movement organise differently to be more accessible to new members, especially to working class women? Is feminism just a question of women struggling together? Do feminist ideas emerge spontaneously when women fight in whatever way to take control of their lives? Or do feminist ideas need to be discovered and developed in consciousness-raising and study groups?

The standard split between "activism" and "consciousness-raising" was discussed in a new way, with both "sides" seeing both as necessary and inter-related.

We reaffirmed the need for an autonomous women's movement, rooted in the struggle against sexism. We talked of "going back to the beginning", combatting everyday manifestations of sexism in the media, advertising and stripshows.

As well as a whole afternoon discussing the direction of the movement, there were dozens of workshops.

Women's burden of housework was discussed in a workshop round a Brighton paper, which suggested we needed a seventh demand and campaign around the sharing of domestic labour and care of dependents.

*The day after returning from the conference, a London sister had German measles diagnosed by a doctor. Any sister in early pregnancy who was there should perhaps tell a doctor of the risk.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HELEN GRACE



Making posters in the See Red workshop

It was agreed that the demand as stated in the paper was too muddled to be proposed at the moment, but that it was certainly a priority to organise publicly about housework in a way which brought out what the women's liberation movement wants to do about this drudgery — to minimise it by fighting for more socialised facilities, and to raise conscious-

ness about sharing it (rather than to demand wages for it).

More work needs to be done on how we fight around this and the childcare demand.

A workshop on socialism discussed why the "Women and Socialism" conferences had collapsed in sectarian squabbles. They decided on a new regional structure, dividing the country into eight areas. Each

Registration on Friday night



will have a one-day conference soon, on a theme relevant to the area.

Information was exchanged about how to set up courses on self-help health and services such as pregnancy testing in the health workshop, which also faced the problem of how much to create alternative structures and how much to put pressure on the NHS to provide what women need.

Women met to discuss hospitals — as workers and patients. Someone from Liverpool said that when she was in hospital having her third baby, a younger woman in the ward was having trouble breast-feeding. She went over to help her, showing her how to hold the breast back so the baby could suck the nipple without suffocating. The Sister came in and screamed, "How dare you touch another woman's breast!"

After the workshops, the plenary. We decided that International Women's Day should be organised locally, not from London, and that local groups should decide how to celebrate. We voted to support WIRES, NAC and Women's Aid, and to hold the next national conference in London.

The plenary petered out after confrontation by a group of lesbians who said they'd felt oppressed all weekend by heterosexuals. Other gay women had found the conference very open, and disagreed with that group's tactics — shouting their anger from the stage.

The rushed voting began to seem pointless, and many sisters were setting off home, so we all disbanded.

Nearly one and a half thousand registered at the conference. Fifty children were looked after by 15 men in a creche nearby. We had a whole toy-town to play in — a college campus empty for Easter, but for a rugby team stomping back to base late on Sunday afternoon.

All weekend we saw films — including *We're Alive*, an amazingly militant film made by women in an American prison, and *To the People of the World*, with Laura Allende and Carmen Castillo talking about resistance in Chile. We bought books, made posters, made friends. On Saturday night, we danced to the Stepney Sisters, sang to each other. We left feeling stronger, recharged. □

Jill Nicholls



# "Got the SS shakes"

Following last month's report of the new style Cohabitation Rule, Glasgow Independence Campaign show what it's like to be two of the 245,000 unsupported mothers who depend on state assistance.

## 1. Do flatmates cohabit?

The first time I claimed Social Security I was asked the usual details — including the name and sex of my flatmate. I was then immediately told that I wasn't entitled to any benefit. When I asked why not, I was told my "address wasn't suitable" and that there was no point in my taking my claim any further. I pressed the assistant to explain why it "wasn't suitable". She disappeared to ask someone what to say. She came back to ask if we were just good friends or if we were living together. I explained we were just friends and she disappeared again. She returned to say that I still wasn't entitled to any benefit, and the only way I would receive any money was for my flatmate to claim for me, but as he was a student he wouldn't be able to claim either. I was told not to bother making any further appointments. I received a letter the following day telling me that my income was too great for me to qualify for benefit. (Strange — as I had no income.)

I knew that if my benefit was being stopped (or not started) because of the cohabitation rule, they would have to prove it and they had no evidence.

I made an appointment for the following week and again made the same statement. They said that I'd hear from them the following week and when no letter arrived I phoned

them. They said a visitor would arrive the following day. Needless to say, no visitor arrived. He came the following Monday, took a further statement, asked to see the sleeping arrangements and said that I'd hear from him in a day or two. He was extremely nervous and obviously embarrassed by the questions he had to ask. When I hadn't heard in a few days, I again telephoned to make an appointment for the Friday. This time, when I arrived, they had forgotten the appointment and "misplaced" the papers. I was asked if I could wait until the following Monday.

By this time I had been without money for three weeks, and I had stopped being polite. I demanded an emergency, over-the-counter payment I knew they were empowered to make. I made an appointment for that afternoon and, after being kept waiting for only an hour and a half this time, I finally received the money I was entitled to.

I had the advantage of knowing my rights. Many people would have been put off after the first interview — the statements of the counter staff were not just deliberately misleading, but also untrue. No doubt they were annoyed by my persistence, but whether or not it was victimisation or just bureaucratic incompetence, there was still an unnecessary delay before I received the money I was entitled to.

## 2. The soft approach

When I first claimed Supplementary Benefit I had been separated from my husband for six months and had a dependent three-year-old daughter. I had a boyfriend but we did not live together.

On routine visits the stock questions were where was my husband, was I getting any money from him, and was I still seeing my boyfriend. When my husband returned from abroad and signed on for unemployment benefit, a social security officer visited him. He said they had been in touch with him and that he had alleged I was living with my boyfriend. I denied this and they seemed satisfied. In fact my husband had been threatened with imprisonment for non-payment of maintenance. He had disclaimed responsibility, saying that I was responsible for the breakup of the marriage, but had never suggested that I was

living with my boyfriend; because he didn't believe that I was.

Several months later I received a visit (without notification) at 9am in the morning. I refused the officer access and agreed to see him at mid-day. Later it transpired that he had immediately gone on to my boyfriend's flat. When the officer returned accompanied by a young woman trainee, I was subjected to the 'soft' approach. There was no reason why I should not have a boyfriend, and no reason why I should not sleep with him. They asked me about the relationship, how were we getting on, in what direction it was likely to develop. All in a tone that I think was meant to simulate genuine interest and concern about me. He questioned me in a way that indicated they'd made fairly thorough investigations into what my boyfriend did and where he stayed. Some of it may have been pure bluff, but it was clearly intended to trip me into confessing I was cohabiting or giving them evidence to show that we were "living together as husband and wife".

To counter some of the thinking which underlies the Cohabitation Rule, the Legal and Financial Independence Campaign have put together a discussion kit. It comes complete with fact sheets about the family and women at work; photographs by the Hackney Flashers; detailed suggestions for local campaigns, for working through trade unions and for using the Equal Opportunities Commission; a book list and useful addresses; and a copy of the pamphlet — *The Demand for Independence*. It raises a whole range of questions about the links between dependence and responsibility for children.

*\*How do children reinforce women's dependence?*

*\*Should individual men be held responsible for the financial support of their own children, or should the State pay the cost of bringing up all children?*

*\*Should we be pushing for more part-time work and more "home work" so that men and women can combine paid work with childcare without too much strain — or should we rather push for nurseries and creches so that mothers and fathers can go out to work full-time?*

The kit is very flexible and easy to change. Please let the Legal and Financial Independence Campaign know how it works in practice and then they can adapt and improve it. The Discussion Kit costs 50p including postage from: 7 Killieser Avenue, London SW2. Telephone: 01-671 2779. □

## WORK

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## GROUPS

New women's liberation group in Blackpool. Inquiries to Denise Lewis telephone 61699.

SLOUGH area forming new group. Contact Cathy.Slough 32168

Festival Club 2 Brydges Place, St. Martins Lane, WC2 welcomes women. Membership £3.00. SAE for details.

Muswell Hill women's group wants new members. Contact Jackie Behar, 888 8103

NUNHEAD, PECKHAM SE15 AREA. Women interested in local group please contact me. I am particularly interested in health and women's rights. Catherine Edwards 5 Bellwood Rd SE15. 639 2368

Women interested in new NAC action group in Poole, Bournemouth. Phone Poole 2998

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I'm hoping to go to India, early Autumn. I'd like to hear from other women who've made the trip and from anyone thinking of going this year. Maybe travel together? Box 476

Two gays gave us lift in Volkswagen Coventry/Stretton/Rugby. Night 10th April Amities. Contact writer. Box 474

Male 28 seeks female for decent friendship. Please telephone 01-515 2473

## COURSES

A series of five workshops for people interested in teaching or organizing women's studies will be held weekly on Thursdays at 7.00 starting on 29th April. The aim is to discuss the objectives, problems and practicalities of women's studies courses. Details from Daphne Taylerson 061-225 9263 or Dept. Extra Mural Studies, University of Manchester, M13 9PL.

Nationwide female only contacts, etc. Very discreet and understanding service. Send SAE to: "Ariadne", The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT

## THERAPY

PRIMAL THERAPY write Jenny James, Atlantis, Burtonport, Letterkenny, Co Donegal, Eire

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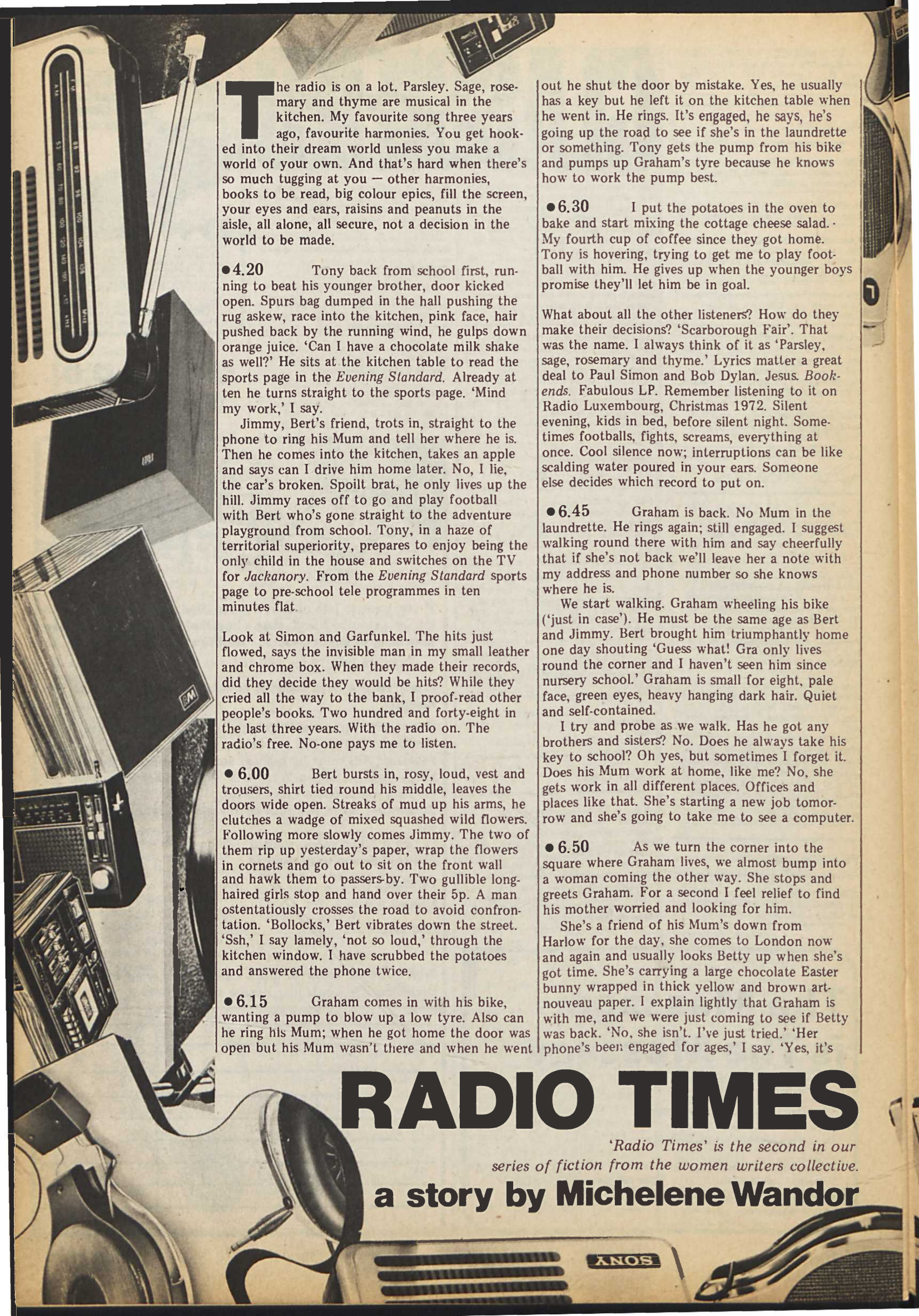
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**T**he radio is on a lot. Parsley. Sage, rosemary and thyme are musical in the kitchen. My favourite song three years ago, favourite harmonies. You get hooked into their dream world unless you make a world of your own. And that's hard when there's so much tugging at you — other harmonies, books to be read, big colour epics, fill the screen, your eyes and ears, raisins and peanuts in the aisle, all alone, all secure, not a decision in the world to be made.

●4.20 Tony back from school first, running to beat his younger brother, door kicked open. Spurs bag dumped in the hall pushing the rug askew, race into the kitchen, pink face, hair pushed back by the running wind, he gulps down orange juice. 'Can I have a chocolate milk shake as well?' He sits at the kitchen table to read the sports page in the *Evening Standard*. Already at ten he turns straight to the sports page. 'Mind my work,' I say.

Jimmy, Bert's friend, trots in, straight to the phone to ring his Mum and tell her where he is. Then he comes into the kitchen, takes an apple and says can I drive him home later. No, I lie, the car's broken. Spoilt brat, he only lives up the hill. Jimmy races off to go and play football with Bert who's gone straight to the adventure playground from school. Tony, in a haze of territorial superiority, prepares to enjoy being the only child in the house and switches on the TV for *Jackanory*. From the *Evening Standard* sports page to pre-school tele programmes in ten minutes flat.

Look at Simon and Garfunkel. The hits just flowed, says the invisible man in my small leather and chrome box. When they made their records, did they decide they would be hits? While they cried all the way to the bank, I proof-read other people's books. Two hundred and forty-eight in the last three years. With the radio on. The radio's free. No-one pays me to listen.

●6.00 Bert bursts in, rosy, loud, vest and trousers, shirt tied round his middle, leaves the doors wide open. Streaks of mud up his arms, he clutches a wadge of mixed squashed wild flowers. Following more slowly comes Jimmy. The two of them rip up yesterday's paper, wrap the flowers in cornets and go out to sit on the front wall and hawk them to passers-by. Two gullible long-haired girls stop and hand over their 5p. A man ostentatiously crosses the road to avoid confrontation. 'Bollocks,' Bert vibrates down the street. 'Ssh,' I say lamely, 'not so loud,' through the kitchen window. I have scrubbed the potatoes and answered the phone twice.

●6.15 Graham comes in with his bike, wanting a pump to blow up a low tyre. Also can he ring his Mum; when he got home the door was open but his Mum wasn't there and when he went

out he shut the door by mistake. Yes, he usually has a key but he left it on the kitchen table when he went in. He rings. It's engaged, he says, he's going up the road to see if she's in the laundrette or something. Tony gets the pump from his bike and pumps up Graham's tyre because he knows how to work the pump best.

●6.30 I put the potatoes in the oven to bake and start mixing the cottage cheese salad. My fourth cup of coffee since they got home. Tony is hovering, trying to get me to play football with him. He gives up when the younger boys promise they'll let him be in goal.

What about all the other listeners? How do they make their decisions? 'Scarborough Fair'. That was the name. I always think of it as 'Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.' Lyrics matter a great deal to Paul Simon and Bob Dylan. Jesus. *Book-ends*. Fabulous LP. Remember listening to it on Radio Luxembourg, Christmas 1972. Silent evening, kids in bed, before silent night. Sometimes footballs, fights, screams, everything at once. Cool silence now; interruptions can be like scalding water poured in your ears. Someone else decides which record to put on.

●6.45 Graham is back. No Mum in the laundrette. He rings again; still engaged. I suggest walking round there with him and say cheerfully that if she's not back we'll leave her a note with my address and phone number so she knows where he is.

We start walking. Graham wheeling his bike ('just in case'). He must be the same age as Bert and Jimmy. Bert brought him triumphantly home one day shouting 'Guess what! Gra only lives round the corner and I haven't seen him since nursery school.' Graham is small for eight, pale face, green eyes, heavy hanging dark hair. Quiet and self-contained.

I try and probe as we walk. Has he got any brothers and sisters? No. Does he always take his key to school? Oh yes, but sometimes I forget it. Does his Mum work at home, like me? No, she gets work in all different places. Offices and places like that. She's starting a new job tomorrow and she's going to take me to see a computer.

●6.50 As we turn the corner into the square where Graham lives, we almost bump into a woman coming the other way. She stops and greets Graham. For a second I feel relief to find his mother worried and looking for him.

She's a friend of his Mum's down from Harlow for the day, she comes to London now and again and usually looks Betty up when she's got time. She's carrying a large chocolate Easter bunny wrapped in thick yellow and brown art-nouveau paper. I explain lightly that Graham is with me, and we were just coming to see if Betty was back. 'No, she isn't. I've just tried.' 'Her phone's been engaged for ages,' I say. 'Yes, it's

# RADIO TIMES

'Radio Times' is the second in our series of fiction from the women writers collective.

a story by Michelene Wandor



out of order, I had it checked.'

I invite her to come back and wait with us but she looks at her watch and says she'll go back to Betty's house and wait, she's got to catch the 8.00 train back anyway. I write my name and address on a piece of paper and give it to her to leave through Betty's letter box, and Graham and I turn back, me carrying the chocolate bunny. His hands are full of bike.

'Never mind,' I chirp, 'she'll know where you are when she gets back.'

How can you be sure that you have all the evidence, that your decision won't be premature. Every day thousands of tiny decisions get made. And every so often one in the chain heralds the big decision, the important one. A friend of mine is going to China where they don't have Simon and Garfunkel. Maybe she'll pick up a hint or two. Maybe one day we'll all be fitted up with little wires so that every time a really important decision comes up, really important for you and other people, you get a little thrill. Meanwhile, turn the magic knob, Mrs Robinson. Wait for the lies. The lines. Jesus loves you more than you will know, Heaven holds a place for those who pray. Killing me softly with his song. Rhyme. Guitars argue with the words. Chorus. Put it in the pantry with the cupcakes. She didn't know either. Had to hide it from the kids. Can't let them find you in bed with a strange man. Repent. Secrecy. Lying on the sofa on a Sunday afternoon. Any way you look at it you lose. Christ. America writes the songs, America calls the tune. Sharpen your wits, get in there and fight. Never retire. Decide.

●7.15 Supper is ready, the kids have all been watching tele quietly. Jimmy has waved goodbye and run off. Graham's tyre has wheezed flat again so he's put it round the side of the house. His Easter bunny is sitting on the hall shelf, still wrapped. I ask Graham if he's hungry. 'No, not very.'

Just as I've got the potatoes out of the oven and everything ready to dish up, the Harlow lady rings the bell. Just to say she's got to go now and for Graham to tell Betty she dropped in. No, she can't stop for a cup of tea. Nice to meet you.

We all sit watching the *Virginian*, eating potatoes, cheese, salami, salad. And finally tinned peaches and cream. Graham's appetite stands up well. Tony and Bert and scrapping, Tony niggling — gradually hogging more and more of the table space till Bert explodes in rage and pushes him so he falls over. Then there's a screaming free for all, during which Graham simply observes, and then we're into the denouement of the *Virginian*.

Apart from the one outburst, Tony and Bert don't seem to sense anything out of the ordinary in Graham's presence. Graham looks surreptitiously at his watch now and again, but gives no other sign. I don't know whether to worry on his behalf or not. I've never met his mother, only spoken to her once on the phone. I wonder angrily whether she's had an accident. I play 'Snap' with Graham to pass the time till he looks at his watch again.

Film of the year, *The Graduate*, drools the invisible man. Terrific film, great success. Long live America. Pack of cigarettes and a highway. Pittsburgh. Four days to hitch-hike, look for Amerika. With a K. Easy Rider has the dream. You look for it and it's following you all the time. It's really a camera wrapped in a dirty rain-

coat. Look at the scenery, read your magazine. Little red spots in the chutney as you spoon it into the dish. Paprika. Cars on the New Jersey Turnpike all come to look for Amerika, on the east and west coasts, a pilgrimage but there it is sitting on the couch next to you on Christmas night 1972, watching an old American movie on TV, selling you your tube ticket to the next Odeon dream, everywhere you look. The title's a title, the decision's a decision and someone else always makes the right ones. Cupcakes, corn-flakes, wrapped in salt beef sandwiches, mustard tastes sharp up your left nostril, but the people aren't as friendly as they used to be, locked behind their glass windows, friendly at the flick of a knob, but they never answer your questions. Too many people.

●8.00 The evening's very clear and light. Some white wine left at the bottom of the bottle in the fridge. I run Bert's bath. Graham comes into the bathroom as Bert undresses. The two boys pee together. Bert looks at Graham with new eyes: 'You Jewish?' 'No.' So much for the evidence.

●8.40 Tony and Bert are both bathed and in pyjamas, wet edges of their hair dampening their jacket collars. Graham is prowling and we set out again, leaving the bike and bunny. When we've started I realise it's gone quite cold. Graham is only wearing a heavy cotton top and is shivering, his hands stuffed in his pockets, his shoulders hunched. We run the last bit.

When we get near the house Graham puts on a spurt for the last few steps. The first-floor window is dark. Graham says 'She's not back.' Never mind, I say, let's go in and see whether the note is still there. Through the wide entrance door into a huge cavernous hall, painted grotty green, two eleven-twelve year olds lounging on the curving staircase, one saying '... if he does it again, I'll smash his teeth in.'

On the first landing is a brown door, a wide aluminium-silver letter box quite new-looking; a triangle of white paper sticks out of one corner. The note with my address on it. I push the note through so that it calls on the floor. Through the letter box the flat is dark. Graham shows no emotion at all.

'Would you like to come back and stay with us tonight?'

'Yes, alright.'

We walk back more slowly.

'Where does Betty go in the evenings?'

'She goes to see her friends sometimes.'

'What do you do when she goes out?'

'Oh, I watch television till it's all finished, then I switch it off and go to bed.'

'Do those boys live in the house?'

'They live upstairs. I don't like them. They ride my bike.'

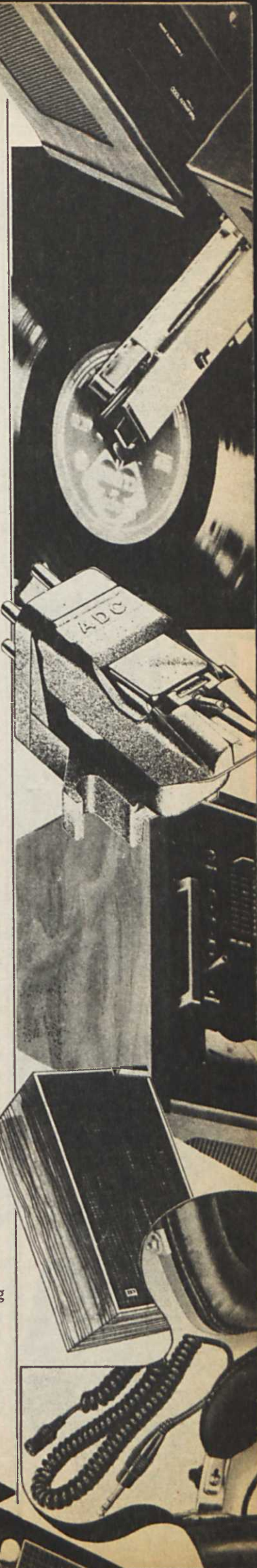
'How long have you been living here?'

'About two years. Or three. She's usually back about ten unless she's gone to a party or something like that.'

'What about your Dad?'

'He doesn't live with us.' As if I hadn't guessed. 'I don't know where he lives.'

Friend of mine described the Osmonds as walking vaginal deodorants. Libel or commercial? Last ditch stand to find the immaculate virgins in the hope that they'll have a few new decisions up their record sleeves. Bridge over troubled water, chalked up an incredible record of 106 weeks in







the charts, the LP, no record collection is complete without. I do mean complete. Well, I'm left in the blue. Tim Hardin leaves you nothing, Simon (or is it Garfunkel?) leaves you a moment in which to decide, Janis Joplin couldn't wait to decide, Aretha Franklin is deciding. And Roberta Flack. Sail on, silver world. See how they shine. Pure silver strings at the end. Hours of aluminium letter boxes. Catch 22 has passed off the page and into the language.

●8.55 We are just back in time to catch the last five minutes of *The Likely Lads*. I try and explain to the boys that I like it because it reminds me of boys I knew in the fifties who later came back from National Service as though to a foreign country, and for whom creeping suburbia, reformed suburban accents, razor eyes behind net curtains, were a defeat. And yet there wasn't anything else. Fit in or get out. Tony, Bert and Graham think the tele's more interesting than I am. Fifties? Eighteen fifties, asks Tony? I tickle him soundly.

●9.15 Tony and Bert in their bunk beds; Graham in a sleeping bag on a foam mattress. I suggested he took his trousers, socks and shirt off. He doesn't want pyjamas, he doesn't want to pee. Tony throws books at Bert. Bert kicks back. I haul Tony off to the bathroom to tell him to stuff it; he's alright, he's not worried about where his Mummy is. Anyway, he's older. Lights off. Bert says 'You haven't kissed us.' I do and ruffle Graham's hair.

In the middle of a record there's sometimes a moment's panic, suddenly the congruence is wrong, it jars, is it the music, is it a faulty disc? Sit back and wait, someone has made an arrangement and the next bar comes right. No misunderstanding if you work your way through it.

The rest of the evening I sit, within hand's reach of the phone, waiting. The television is on. Worrying about whether to worry, I can't work. The proof galleys lie splayed on the couch next to me, a biro waiting in case I change my mind. I decide to wait an hour before deciding whether to ring the police. As the late news drones brightly on, a faceless Betty speaks to me through the shape of the newsreader: He's perfectly alright on his own. He can get his supper, put himself to bed, he's perfectly alright in the flat on his own. There's plenty of neighbours if there's a fire. Who can afford babysitters? I hate being a temp. I hate those men who think you're easy just because you move around from office to office. They don't know it's because you can't stand to see their flabby faces, all like each other, it's just the change of background you do it for, not the *people*. It pays better, that's why. What I do in the evening's my business. He's healthy and happy, isn't he?

I wait another hour.

●12.30 The tele whines facelessly. No-one has rung. No-one has come. Graham is sleeping restlessly, talking in his sleep, can't make out the words. He gets up to pee but isn't really awake.

●1.00 I go to bed. There is no such thing as a good mother. I leave my door open 'just in case'.

When a record hushes round and round, the needle caught in the smooth circle in the middle, you remember other music. Springtime three years later things jump unbidden to the top of your

mind, the word Christmas is hazy and you can't remember why it stuck. When my children grow off and leave me, I may be like all those other mothers, lines round the eyes and where I used to smile. There will be no-one to need me.

Next morning Tony and Bert go to school, after an argument as to which takes dinner money in silver and which takes it in copper. Silver is favourite, because that way there are fewer coins to lose. Graham's school has half term this week.

●9.00 I suggest that we go round to Graham's house but he says that if she's back she won't like getting up before ten o'clock. What about her new job? Oh, she doesn't start that till Monday.

●10.00 We walk round the corner again. It is sunny. My proofs must be finished and delivered tomorrow. My working day without my own children is not available to be filled with other people's children. We reach the house. 'She's back'. The window is shut, the curtains drawn.

Graham runs up the stairs and shouts through the letter box: 'It's me, Graham, I forgot my key and —' The door opens and a bare arm leans out, followed by a head, the same dark hair, green eyes smudged with mascara. The rest is hidden, there is other movement in the background.

Graham blurts about the friend and the bunny and I explain that I'm a friend's mother and Graham stayed with us because he shut himself out and didn't know where she was. I'm beginning to feel like a social worker. I'm afraid she'll see what I was thinking last night. Graham says can he go back with me to get his bike and bunny and she nods yes and gives me a big smile.

In two years time I may remember 1975 as the year the United Nations told us was International Women's Year, the year Helen Reddy had a hit called 'Angie Baby'. This girl lived shut in her room, in the world of her radio. A boy who tried to make her disappeared into the sound of her radio and was never seen again. One American TV network said Helen Reddy had to either shave her armpits or tape over her nipples before she appeared on tele. She shaved. I wonder what made her decide that way.

Graham skips along, criss-crossing the pavement in front of me. I'm also walking faster. 'I'm glad she's in a good mood, sometimes when she's tired she isn't in a good mood.' 'Yes,' I say, 'I'm like that sometimes when I'm tired, aren't you?' But of course that isn't what he's saying.

●10.20 Back at the house he gets the bike, balances the bunny under his right arm and is off. 'Goodbye,' he says. 'Goodbye,' I say. 'See you.'

Oh, and did I tell you about the time my eldest son broke his finger? Between Christmas and Easter 1974. Well, not exactly broke; more like a crack, a hairline crack in the bone. They heal up in no time, kids do, said the young doctor, trying to ignore me and be friendly to the child. Bitch of a sister mistook me for an anxious mother. Sail on, silver world.

●10.30 I stand back for a minute. I must sort out the dirty washing and then get back to picking my way carefully through other people's words. I turn the radio on. □



Why does a woman become depressed after having a baby? Should we blame it all on our hormones? Is there something destructive in the life a new mother leads? For the fourth article in our series on what happens to women who look for help, Catherine Ballard and Hilary Hackett talked to women about their experience of post (after) partum (birth) depression; what their needs were and whether anything helped.

# "My world became the size of the baby"

"I was alone in the house. The baby was asleep upstairs and I had lots of ordinary things to do. Suddenly I was totally overwhelmed by feelings of panic and terror. My feelings both mental and physical were as if a tiger had walked in the door, so that I was alerted, panic-stricken and in complete turmoil. I had this terrifying sensation that I had somehow snapped."

About 80,000 women every year seek help from their doctors for emotional disturbances of varying intensity following childbirth. This whole area of disturbance, not clearly understood, is usually loosely labelled 'post-(after)-partum-(birth)-depression'. Yet it may not necessarily take place in the immediate post-partum period, nor take the form of depression, nor include feelings of aggression towards the baby, as is often supposed:

"If I had felt more obviously miserable or had begun to dislike my child, something might have clicked for us all about what was wrong with me." (mother of five-month-old baby diagnosed as having 'severe post-partum depression')

What then is post-partum depression? According to a consultant gynaecologist: "It's all bunkum and baloney . . ."

But a consultant psychiatrist said:

"Bloody gynaecologists and midwives fill my wards with desperate women."

The period following childbirth is necessarily one of adjustment to great change in a woman's view of herself and in her relationships. Many women we talked to said that they felt themselves to be in a fog of exhaustion and doubt. Doctors 'comfortingly' reassure them that after about six weeks or 'when the cycle re-establishes itself' — things will 'sort themselves out'. They ignore the terrifying feelings some women have: shock, insecurity, inadequacy, confusion and resentment; fears about their ability to love or look after the child; inexplicable states of tension and difficulty in relaxing and sleeping; sensations of having lost their 'real selves'; new and unpleasant feelings about their bodies and sexuality; guilt feelings sometimes associated with disappointment about the child's sex or looks; loss of concentration and appetite; an obsession with the baby and its routine.

"One afternoon the baby was asleep in the other room. I fell into a deep sleep and after about ten minutes he began to

cry. I went to the cot and shook him and shouted 'Shut up for God's sake!' I felt I *had* to sleep and sleep. That was the most important thing, he yelled so much and I was shattered."

"The day I came home from hospital, I realised that I'd never be able to follow my own line again."

"Immediately after Joanna was born I felt really sexy, but by the time the stitches had healed I couldn't face it. The baby seemed to take all my energy. I couldn't have cared less about him and his demands."

"I felt fantastically happy with the baby and also with Jonathan, my first child. I didn't particularly want my husband near me, in fact I got him to sleep downstairs. I can remember feeling tremendously happy in the bedroom with the two children, because Jonathan came to sleep with me as well, which my mother didn't approve of."

"I was shocked to see myself in the mirror. My body looked flabby and worn out. I couldn't imagine anyone ever wanting me again. Worst of all, I still couldn't wear anything but my maternity clothes."

"The man I was living with was so battered by the change the baby made to his life that we actually sat down one night and contemplated separating. But the next morning it all seemed horrible and ridiculous."

"At this point (after birth of second child) I stopped having any ambitions about finishing my research. I gave up completely. I found that I had less and less to talk to Alan about, apart from the children, that was our shared life. After this our sex life was less good, our marriage rests very much on the children now."

Such feelings may come and go during the first few weeks of the baby's life and then disappear completely. Or they may be, or may become, more intense and begin to swamp a woman. She may be quite unable to 'snap out' of her moods which might continue for a year or longer.

Sometimes feelings of inadequacy and resentment develop into real depression: total inability to face even the easiest day, to perform simple jobs or make decisions, and perhaps self-hatred or hostility towards the baby. Tension and irritability become physical and mental panic: trembling, dizziness, morbid horrors of sickness and death, phobic anxieties about going out, being alone or talking to people. Moods may swing between euphoria and despair, between over-protectiveness to the baby and lack of interest in it. A woman in this state may well not realise that she is disturbed; each of her feelings will probably seem real and reasonable to her as she experiences it. Other people will find it difficult to understand even if she can explain. One woman, who went through many anxieties, realised that she had struggled alone to rationalise them:

"... it was the weather, or it was anaemia, or it was going back to work, or else it was my relationship with Paul. I had reasons for everything: it was my lack of routine or my personality, but never that it was something to do with post-natal depression. I never once *dared* to admit that. I don't know why I was so frightened of it, that would have been an admitting of failure I suppose."

It is often difficult for a woman who has post-partum depression to imagine what she was like before it began — the change in herself has taken place so suddenly. One woman explained her shock at a sharp return to a normality which, although an immense relief, was different from the way she felt before she conceived:

"One morning, when he was about six months old, I just woke up feeling



different. It was right from the start, I recognised myself. I kept waiting for this happiness to slump back, but it didn't. What it was was just ordinary, everyday O.K., different to when I had been pregnant and before, and from then on I was feeling really great."

Perhaps one or two women in 1,000 become seriously psychotic after childbirth, and may have to be admitted to psychiatric wards straight from the maternity hospitals. This can happen to women who have no known history of emotional disturbance and in most cases the outlook is very good and recovery complete. Psychotic mothers may refuse to acknowledge that the baby is theirs, revert completely to child-like behaviour or experience paranoia or hallucinations.

All this, from the long-lasting anxiety state to severe psychosis is a far cry from the 'third day blues', that period of weepiness which the baby manuals predict will hit most mothers 'when the milk comes in', and after which they are expected to cope, to be themselves again, serene, capable and cosy. Yet . . .

"One morning I bathed the baby and did everything, saw that everything was in order, and I can just remember having the feeling that they'd all be better off without me, because I'm finished. And I took an overdose, a very bad overdose." (woman describing herself as she was when her baby was six weeks old)

It is just not known why some women break down under the stress of the particular changes of childbirth, while for others the problems do not become serious.

The most usual explanation for post-partum depression is 'hormone imbalance' but reports of depression in fathers and adoptive mothers indicate that the causes are not purely physical. Nevertheless insufficient research has been done on hormone levels following delivery and on the connection between

hormone levels and mood states. The information that is available seems to be contradictory and has aroused little interest in a male dominated profession. It is also argued that it might be the state of anxiety and depression which 'unbalances' the hormones, in the same way that anxiety is known to disturb the menstrual cycle. In any case, it is absurd that so little research has been done and that there is still no widely accepted hormone treatment for post-partum depression when a link has been recognised for many years. However, to attribute the whole phenomenon to hormones is to miss the vitally important question of how *different* women will react to a life-crisis which is psychological and social as well as biological.

Recently a lot of publicity has been given to another explanation – the birth situation. Research has centred particularly on the psychological effects of induction of birth, the use of pain-relieving drugs, the separation of the mother and baby following the birth and the effect which this has on their relationship. While it is very clear that a bad birth experience may adversely affect the mother's feelings for her baby and may also cause more general depression, this too does not provide the whole answer. The actual experience of birth is of crucial importance to the mother and it will remain clearly imprinted on her memory for the rest of her life, but some of the mothers to whom we talked had become depressed after really good home births. For example, both these women had easy deliveries at home:

"It wasn't panic about can I look after the baby, or the family, or the house. I was perfectly confident. There was no rational explanation for it, it just happened. Just terribly panicky and Oh God, how am I going to face the day, how am I going to get through it, and there was absolutely nothing

happening in the day, nothing to frighten me at all."

"When the baby was about five weeks old I quite suddenly started getting these panics and I felt depressed and tense and exhausted and completely cut off from people and reality. And above all feelings of terrible inadequacy started coming over me in great waves, as though I'd never be able to manage anything. I couldn't understand it, I'd felt so marvellous for the first few weeks, and that's the hardest time."

Other women have become depressed after the birth of each of their children, even though the births had taken place in very different circumstances, some 'good', some 'bad'. Organisations like the National Childbirth Trust and the Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services can do a lot to help us regain control of our bodies during pregnancy and birth and to secure the best possible circumstances for delivery. But for most women the reality is, and is likely to remain, impersonal antenatal check-ups, classes to learn a few 'relaxation' exercises and how to bathe a baby, a hospital birth with drugs and then home with a screaming infant and a tin of National Dried.

A more general explanation is that of conflict with the false ideal of glowing motherhood and the perfect baby, perpetrated by women's literature and lore, which influences most of us however realistic we think we are. There is a conspiracy of silence over this: other women, even close friends and neighbours, *seem* to be coping and they throw our (imaginary) inadequacy into relief. And because they (and we) struggle to keep up the front of competence, the myth that any woman can cope is perpetuated and it becomes very hard to discuss real feelings and anxieties with other women.

"I persevered with breast feeding, not because I gained satisfaction but because of propaganda, especially among the women I go round with."

Conversations often stop at the level of the baby's development and the mother's health. However comments like these cropped up again and again in our interviews:

"Even now, after three children, I can feel very detached and strange about it. I often get this impression that perhaps I'm only playing with dolls after all and that it isn't really true and that one day I'll wake up and I'll be 12 years old and they are dolls."

"I remember shutting myself in the kitchen with the radio on, so that I couldn't hear the baby scream. I guess I must have been depressed."

"I remember knowing that I loved the baby, but I just couldn't feel anything."

Often it was only in retrospect that these



feelings could be acknowledged.

Our impression is that although all these explanations are important, the over-riding and under-emphasised factor is the identity crisis and dislocation of self brought about by childbirth, which most of the women we talked to were grappling to describe in their different ways. Puberty, establishing important relationships and the menopause are all seen as unavoidable stages of maturation, but in these we are primarily responsible only to ourselves. Childbirth is perhaps a greater crisis than those others in that it involves the creation of a dependent, separate being which *demands* radical changes in the mother's personality and relationships.

"I feel spread thin, like peanut butter. You *can't* bring up three children and still remain the same."

"Even when she's at Nursery, and I'm working, I find it hard to shut her right out of my mind."

Our research so far seems to show that there is a much higher incidence of admission to mental hospital following childbirth among working class mothers. They may often have very little support from men and nowadays less from other members of their families or neighbours. The main problems are isolation, exhaustion and confusion:

"I can remember watching the woman next door through a gap in the curtains. She was hanging out her nappies and I used to wait for her to go back inside before I hung out mine, because I didn't know what to say to her. I felt so down."

"I already had four kids when Tom decided to take on the greengrocery business, then I fell on with Sean. After he was born, business got very bad, I was so desperate I couldn't take any more. I wanted to leave Tom but I couldn't. I was worn out but I used to have terrible dreams about mountains of rotting oranges."

"I felt like a child. I wanted to run home to my mother and father and be a little girl again. I felt I was caught in a web, I didn't know how to look after them all."

If people around the woman are insensitive to her feelings then she may have to resort to totally bizarre behaviour to express her distress. Such women have been picked up by the police, doggedly pushing the pram around the centre of the city after dark, or have broken windows or smashed up their most prized possessions. They may then be hospitalised, labelled 'disturbed', and only then, if they are lucky, will they have the chance to sleep enough, eat enough, get to know themselves and (if there are nursery facilities available) their babies, and to think things through.

Many middle class women, by the nature of their education, have been conditioned to believe that they should be able to cope alone, with ease, in all situations. They expect and are expected to play the superman role as mothers, continuing to succeed professionally at the same time as being 'good' mothers. Although they may be able to analyse and articulate their feelings and so may avoid hospitalisation — perhaps because they can approach their GPs with confidence — nonetheless they may find themselves in equally frightening situations:

"I really was in an awful state and for days and days all I could concentrate on was a game called 'Chinese Chequers'. Nick, God knows how he went through it, and I just played this child's game over and over again."

"I became agoraphobic, it really undermined my personality, but I was able, by bits of strategic planning, to go out occasionally with someone else, and for a long time nobody knew."

"I was somehow behind a black curtain. We thought it must just be the culmination of overwork and exhaustion. And when I saw the doctor he was completely thrown by this ranting and raving middle class woman."

Such a woman can neither easily accept guidance from traditional sources nor from people who formerly gave her support:

"I was in a consciousness-raising group and I used to go and they'd say 'How are you feeling?' and I'd say 'Oh, O.K.' and leave it at that. What had I got to say? I was just in a muddle and you can't talk about a muddle to people, can you?"

How then can a woman assess when things have got too much for her to bear, admit this to herself and to others, and find support and help.

For dealing with the immediate problem, either a good GP or other women who are able to step out from behind their own facades can be very helpful in explaining that feelings of conflict and inadequacy and other, stranger, psychological symptoms are not as unique to her as she thinks they are. Unfortunately, few doctors are sensitive enough, or have the time, to give support to the woman and those around her over possibly a long period, reassuring her that her feelings are not unusual, 'wrong' or 'mad'.

"All the psychiatrist could tell me was that my problem was 'trying to be a woman in a man's world' and that I should 'settle down with my baby'."

The *time* necessary for every mother's adjustment to her new situation must be recognised with patience by those around her and particularly by the woman herself. The new physical demands on her are stressful and at the same time she will be working through great personal change often in a state of heightened emotional awareness. This makes her very vulnerable to pressures from other people, such as criticisms about the way she looks after her baby, suggestions that she is too preoccupied with it and has cut herself off from her old life and become a different person. It can take many months even for a strong and self-aware woman to feel really competent to care for her baby, to become immune to other people's conflicting advice, to come to terms with herself and to feel ready to return to her social life and her job.

It is very important that, while accepting this, she makes every effort not to isolate herself, arranging support and help in looking after the baby, and learning to trust her own judgement. Ideally both men and other women should give their time and practical help to the new mothers, and it is necessary for her to become less precious about doing everything for the



child herself. Of prime importance is the relationship with husbands, closest friends, mothers and so on. A depressed and 'irrational' woman usually arouses sympathy in the first instance, particularly where there is an obvious reason for her state. However, when depression has become chronic the initial sympathy may fade — the woman should 'pull herself together', she has 'added responsibilities now' and 'cannot go on like this much longer'. These attitudes are not necessarily aggressive nor do they indicate that a relationship has broken down. It is essential that a woman shares her real feelings with others: if you have a good GP let him talk to your husband, mother or whoever else thinks that your distress is trivial. You need space and freedom from pressure. Make your self known.

We have found in our research that many women who experienced post-partum depression failed to recognise their symptoms or were extremely afraid of them. But it is difficult to know just how much heavy publicity about the possibility of depression a pregnant woman can take. Nevertheless, those of us who have been depressed should not be ashamed to talk of it openly, and at last the baby manuals are becoming more realistic about how a mother will feel after the birth of her baby. For example:

"A feeling of anti-climax follows the first overwhelming sense of achievement and excitement and all of a sudden she's at rock bottom, and left wondering why."

"In a very few cases a mother may develop a severe post-natal depression. She loses her ability to cope. She may reject her baby. This has very little to do with a passing black mood. It's no good jollyng her along, telling her to take it easy and it will pass. She needs sound medical advice and help ..."

"... Some days may go like a dream. Others may seem hellish. You're cross with your husband. You can't stand his mother's advice. You're over-tired. You hate the baby. It seems to cry non-stop. You're overwhelmed and feel you can't cope ..."

(from 'New Baby', a Health Visitors' Association Publication 1975 — handed out free at clinics)

It is to be hoped that this is a sign that Health Visitors are becoming aware of the need to look out for symptoms of depression for a long time after the birth.

Many other societies — and our own until a few decades ago — have social mechanisms to affect the transition into motherhood openly and smoothly, giving the individual woman a pattern to follow and protecting her from stress and isolation. Rituals are performed involving the whole family or community to mark the birth and events such as

weaning, first hair-cutting, first tooth and so on. The birth of a child is not treated as a private act of production but as an event which concerns and changes the *whole* social group. However, in such societies, unlike our own, extended family relationships are still strong.

In our culture, celebrations as part of an outward sign of caring and an acknowledgement of achievement are in short supply. Flowers, congratulatory cards and presents are pleasant, but in a way distant, depersonalised and soon over. Apart from the Christening service, which is much less common than it was, the only public 'ritual' is the post-natal examination at six weeks which puts the final seal on having had the baby.

"Until then you are allowed to feel vaguely poorly, but after the 'Right, fine, well done!' you are publicly given a clean bill of health and that's it"

Modern European society tends to promote the ideal of the lone, independent and self-determining individual. The responsibility for personal and psychological adjustment is placed squarely on the shoulders of the individual woman at a time when she is most vulnerable. One way out of the loneliness and strangeness which childbirth inflicts on us today is to share the experience with other women. Kate, whose baby is six months now, still meets three women from her ante-natal class every day. "We would have been friends any way — we share a lot of interests." They babysit for one another and generally give each other support.

Mary describes how she and a group of women used to "coincide at the Welfare Clinic". It was years before the growth of today's women's movement

and it never occurred to them to meet consciously as a group. She says, "I never knew if the other women were depressed too. We'd moan a lot about our husbands — 'them' — it was therapeutic. But we were very competitive, always eying each other's babies."

Looking back she believes it would have helped her enormously if they had had the confidence to meet on a regular basis, perhaps discussing books or articles they had all read, particularly those which emphasise the mother's point of view. She suggests that women stick up a notice in their Welfare Clinic inviting others to form a group:

"You've got to try and feel some connection with the outside world, with adults, otherwise you lose touch with your adult self. I think that sort of all-encompassing world that you slide into when you have a baby is dangerous because you become paralyzed and dependent. Meeting other women, reading and talking weans you."

A group of women in Hackney, London, decided last year to meet regularly once a fortnight after their babies were born. Joceline describes how the group helped her:

"I thought my life wouldn't be changed much by a baby. It took me over though — a child really brings out your deepest anxieties. I started relating differently to situations — everything became difficult, problematic; cleaning the house, washing nappies, even drinking a cup of tea. I also felt differently towards people, but my friends related to me as if I was the same and I tried to live up to their expectations. I couldn't; I freaked out, got paranoid and became a recluse with my baby and my world became the size of the baby. "Then I started getting together with a couple of other women with young babies. 'I just scream into my pillow at night and sometimes feel like killing myself,' one of them told me. I felt a shock of recognition. Every time we meet now we check out what we have gone through, compare, analyse and feel a lot of mutual support."

Finally then, a willingness to step out of our own image consciousness, giving consistent care and support, and recognition that looking after a baby is hard, life-changing work, are some ways in which we can all make the post-partum period positive rather than destructive. We would then be helping each other towards a creative acceptance of our own identities and of the interdependent and always growing identities of our children. □

*Catherine and Hilary would like to hear about people's experiences of post-partum depression. Write to them c/o 7 Alma Road, Leeds 6.*



# reviews

## BOOKS

reader and succeeds in being readable, with beautiful illustrations.

It deals first with the ideas about women current at the time and then contrasts the ideal with the reality of life for aristocratic, urban and peasant women. The Church and the aristocracy were the dominant institutions in the society. Both denigrated women, though in rather different ways. The Church combined an assumption of woman's inferiority with a view of her as positively evil (the Eve/Devil image) and with the cult of the Virgin Mary flourishing at the same time. The aristocracy treated its wives and daughters as property whilst at the

feudal society, and it encompassed far more than it does today. The housewife was an extremely busy and responsible person. Aristocratic ladies were frequently very active in the management of households and estates. Urban women participated in virtually every kind of industry and trade, though often they were not allowed to join Guilds.

The labour of peasant women was absolutely necessary to maintain the labour-intensive, subsistence economy, nevertheless their subordination was always assumed. Education was virtually inaccessible to them and nunneries provided the only accepted institutional outlet for unmarried women (of the right class) to use their abilities. Marriage both gave and denied status. Eileen Power describes very well women's work experience; but leaves out much of family life, particularly child-care. As we discover more about the shifts in demand for women's labour in different societies, it becomes even more important to understand the role of the woman as wife and mother if we are to grasp what factors moulded the sexual division of labour.

Catherine Hall



15th century Silk Women

same time taking up chivalric ideals about the 'perfect lady'. These ideals apparently placed a few women in exalted positions, but their power was strictly limited to courtly games.

Diatribes against women in marriage reached a peak in 15th century France in the long poem *Le Roman de la Rose*, which was attacked by Christine de Pizan, one of the first women to make her living as a writer. As Enid McLeod points out in *The Order of the Rose*, Pizan's feminism was limited to a defence of the rights of women to act as helpers and supporters of men and to be treated as responsible people in their own right.

But, as Eileen Power shows, ideas had only a limited influence: "For in daily life man could not do without woman; he relied on her for the comfort of his home, and much more than at many other periods of history, he relied on her to look after his affairs in his absence from home." Women had a crucial role to play in economic life. The home was the central unit of production in

**MEDIEVAL WOMEN**  
by Eileen Power  
(Cambridge University Press, £4.40, and £1.90 paperback)  
**THE ORDER OF THE ROSE**  
by Enid McLeod  
(Chatto & Windus, £5.00)

Eileen Power was working on a major study of women in medieval society when she died, which is now going to be finished by an American woman. Meanwhile some of her work has been edited in this book by M.M. Postan showing her wide grasp of medieval sources. The book is aimed at the general

## BOOKS for children

### A GREAT BICYCLE BOOK

by Jane Sarnoff and Reynold Ruffins  
(Kestrel, £2.25)

### THE BIG BOOK OF KNITTING

by Ursula Von Wartburg  
(Kestrel, £3.95)

### LOOP, KNOT AND PLAIT &

### SHAKE, RATTLE AND BANG

by Gunilla Wolde  
(Adam & Charles Black, 95p)

"Have you ever helped your mother with - ?" is a typical start to the typical information book aimed at girls, usually about cooking, sewing or knitting - 'how-to' books are not of course exempt from the sexist assumptions of children's fiction.

Publishers are scavenging about to find reference and information books that are beginning to make an effort to show children involved in non-sex-stereotyped activities. Once again we find that the books discussed here were originally



## PLAYS

### SINK SONGS

Plays by Dinah Brooke and Michelene Wandor (London: published by the authors, 1975)



Michelene Wandor

Dinah Brook



I feel at a disadvantage writing this review, both for myself and for the people reading it; I haven't seen any of these plays performed and I've had to guess how they come across visually. I'm writing the review anyway because I was excited by the plays and by the fact of their existence; we can't have too much attack on and discussion of the system of our oppression. These plays examine the ownership and control of our ideas and our private-social selves, and of our art forms.

The feminist playwright is at a disadvantage *vis a vis* any other playwright. She may occasionally be allowed to present her work as part of a safely special season to dispel the popular myth that women have never written plays and can't. But there's more to being a feminist playwright than being female. Feminist art is necessarily political and radical; it challenges the way society is organized and locates the oppression of women as a function of that society. Not many feminist plays get put on in the West End, for their content would disturb too strongly what we're told we like: the constant reinforcement of dominant social values around the family and male-female relationships. Any play suggesting that these structures mediate unhappiness and oppression would be called over-crude by the warmly guilty mass of liberal playwrights

and critics as they sit comfortably on their fence constructed of sensitivity, ambiguity, irony and male experience. A fence that separates women from each other and from recognition, validation and exploration of their own experience.

Over this fence climb Dinah Brooke and Michelene Wandor, some may feel with their jack-boots on. These plays are not heavy handed (heavy footed?), however, but violent. Violent because their content comes as a shock (a play about feeding a baby? about growing up a woman? about housework? oh for Christ's sake); violent because full of the pain of women living the impossible double binds that are their social, emotional, economic and sexual reality.

These plays are all about that pain; at the same time, which I think is important for feminist literature, they are about change, how women can move through the passivity of seeing themselves only as victims. We are shown women discovering the contradictions they live, understanding that they themselves are both

formed by their situation and in turn can inform it. We are shown women using that knowledge that can come from personal experience in order to begin to recognise and use politically their shared experience. Much modern drama hinges on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Dinah Brooke and Michelene Wandor in their different ways push on with the exploration that the women's movement is making from the personal to the political, how and why the personal is political, how the sets of ideas that we live reinforce and are rooted in the political system needing and producing them.

Both writers discuss the consciousness of individuals; both writers use fairly abstract characters to do so (He and She, Mum and Son, O and Y, etc.). As a device this is less about stereotyping than about pointing out how we are taught to see ourselves as individual, separate and private, although in fact we can also understand ourselves in terms of groupings around sex and class. The description of the

published in the USA or Scandinavia.

*Spare Rib* 44 discussed a crop of cookery books for boys as well as girls and now *A Great Bicycle Book* goes out of its way to relate bicycle riding and maintenance to girls as well as boys. Authors Jane Sarnoff and Reynold Ruffins both admit that the process of creating this book taught them how to maintain their own machines — most encouraging for the reader who is a complete beginner!

The book itself is appetitisingly illustrated in cartoon style and contains lots of amazing bicycle lore. At the same time the authors' presentation of terminology, instructions for maintenance, safety rules, etc., is clear and accompanying diagrams enlightening. USA terminology occasionally obtrudes — e.g. 'highrider' for 'chopper' — but children old enough to ride a two-wheeler can cope with that. Throughout, energetic girls and boys are shown oiling, pumping and pedalling. A great bicycle book indeed, for eight-year-olds upwards.

*The Big Book of Knitting* deals with a more traditionally female pursuit but manages, despite the fact that only girls seem to have been involved in making the objects shown, to present knitting as the skill worthy of attention and pride that it is. The photographs of beautifully made toys, pullovers, socks, etc., of all varieties and degrees of complexity, made by eight to fifteen-year-olds at Ms von Wartburg's workshops are an expression of the children's enthusiasm and dexterity with needles and wool — this is really their book. Instructions and patterns are clearly laid out. A book to inspire eight-year-olds upwards or younger children with a bit of help.

For five to eight-year-olds Gunilla Wolde (of *Thomas* book fame) has produced *Loop, Knot and Plait*. Ms Wolde's efforts to be non-sexist have finally resulted in unisex children, only identifiable after lengthy consultation with the text. *Loop, Knot and Plait* shows you how to do just that, and crochet as well. *Shake, Rattle and Bang* has the same curiously uniform children making their own musical instruments.

Rosemary Stones  
Children's Rights Workshop

## EXHIBITION

### WOMEN: WHO ARE WE?



CLAIRE SCHWOB

This was the title of a recent exhibition of photographs by Claire Schwob at the Half Moon Gallery in London, but the exhibition itself did little to answer the question. The 42 photographs, interesting though they were, presented more a documentary of women in the roles of wife, mother, girlfriend or worker. Some were very powerful as single images. But in the light of Claire's aim: "to provide a positive visual statement of women as people" the most memorable images were expressing women's alienation at home, at work, in a restaurant or simply shopping.

Susan Lambert



CLAIRE SCHWOB



specific details of individual consciousness simultaneously pushes us through those definitions 'man' and 'woman', 'middle class' and 'working class', towards confronting how we learn and live sex and class ideologies via a variety of institutions such as the family and the school. We move from subjectivity into objectivity, the two constantly informing one another.

This comes across very strongly in Michelene's set of five duologue plays entitled *To Die Among Friends*, where time and again one exclaims, 'Yes, that's it, that's happened to me, I've been in that particular double bind.' At the same time one is enabled to see the pattern from outside. Via the structure of the plays and the way that questions are posed, we begin to move through contradictions into change, a slow and painful process, as Michelene demonstrates in all of her plays. She gives us five examples of particular social relationships. These are: mother and child; man and woman in destructively romantic trap; two men from different class backgrounds; unthinking married coupledom moving into consciously struggling coupledom; and women struggling into both independence and collectivity. The latter is expressed through the image of a conversation between an older and a younger woman. Each play has its own internal consistency and emotional validity but they fit importantly together to enable us to follow the circling and darting movement of change.

I found the last play, *Swallows*, the most abstract and the most difficult, probably because it's the most ambitious, probing at complicated strands of the pattern of change. It is set in the rawness of the now of women's consciousness: what is support? what new forms of relationship can we create as we break out of the old ones? how can very different women reach each other as both human and political beings? The play's ambiguity and lack of resounding resolution are therefore less a literary problem than a political fact: there are no bibles or blueprints for the way forward – we take the responsibility for analysing the situation and developing a strategy.

In all this sequence of plays the bones of analysis are fleshed out into a humanity to which we can respond; the construction of the rhythms and repetitions of thought and speech give the characters an emotional as well as a political truth cohering them to each other. And within this again, is the abstract richness of images.

By contrast, the speech of Dinah's characters, in her two plays *Love Food* and *That's My Boy*, is a more straightforward attempt to reproduce working-class idiom. I'm not sure whether this realist language always works; for example a sentence like "Mrs Fog's Albert got sent to Borstal" seems to me a crude shorthand for a particular experience and mode of expression. The realism of language is matched by the political message of the plays being enmeshed in what are at first glance specifically real life situations: a mother at home in her kitchen world of baby to feed and background radio music; a family group interacting around

dinner on Christmas Eve. Dinah is smashing on detail: the iconography of people's lives (the radio, tomato ketchup, masturbation, chops and peas) is all there.

Surfaces, these, through which Dinah causes to erupt a shocking structure of repressed emotion. Explicit in her plays is her acceptance of psychoanalytic theory (very briefly – unacceptable wishes and desires being repressed, becoming unconscious and often re-emerging as neurotic symptoms), and in particular that of Melanie Klein. Dinah says of the latter in her introduction "Like all psychoanalytic theory, it seems to lend itself irresistibly to expression in terms of theatre, preferably farce." One ambivalence I have about these two plays, unfortunately, is that the farcical element is so strong as to be a convenient safety valve for an audience's anxiety and fear when confronted with their violent and demanding subject matter; I can imagine a lot of uneasy laughter preventing their political realities from being absorbed. The other ambivalent feeling I have is about an audience's unfamiliarity with the ideas of Melanie Klein. The only way to overcome this, since it can't simply emerge implicitly as the plays unfold, is through the device of, for example, the son in *That's My Boy* explaining to his mother what it's all about; in this case why he's giving her a pair of rubber tits for Christmas.

One of the things which sets *Sink Songs* apart from some other agit-prop drama is their recognition of new territory to be mapped – the discussion of our internal life as more complicated than merely a reflection of the 'more important' economic reality that we live. The decision to deal with it means creating new agit-prop theatrical forms. *Sink Songs* wouldn't work as street theatre; they're too long and too complex, and are texts as much as picture images. Where they would work really well is not only in the theatre but also the classroom, where there is time and space for discussion and exploration of their ideas. They'd make a really good introduction to the women's movement. I haven't quoted much from them as I hope that you'll look at them for yourselves. The fact that Dinah and Michelene have begun to speak about that territory of consciousness and change in the form they have chosen I find exciting for the women's movement. We need more feminist playwrights like we need more writers and painters. The political struggle is to transform bourgeois art forms.

Dinah and Michelene have done their own publishing and layout; a demystification not only of the creative process but also of the means of its material production.

If you can't get *Sink Songs* at your local bookshop, you could write to the authors, enclosing postage.

Michele Roberts

*Sink Songs* has just been reprinted, costs 50p, and is available from Michelene Wandor, 71 Belsize Lane, London NW3. A few copies of the first edition are still available, at 45p each!

## FILM



CONNOISSEUR FILMS

Joan Hotchkiss as Bissy in *Legacy* with her senile mother. Trapped inside herself, seeing everything in terms of herself, Bissy thinks, "Hope I don't get like her" – she is like her.

## LEGACY

Directed by Karen Arthur

The film opens with Bissy, a North American businessman's wife, visiting her tearful, crippled, narrow-minded old mother. "Hope I don't get like her," she keeps repeating as she leaves. She is like her, we soon realise. In her own sumptuous home she systematically surveys her expensive possessions. She fondles her favourite salad bowl and begins planning a huge dinner party for her husband's important friend.

It's quickly clear that Bissy's life is totally empty and boring; one of real isolation and perpetual frustration. The servants leave her with nothing to do, neither housework nor childcare. Her frustration and aggression all come out in the form of endless racist bigotry and prejudice against the servant; niggers, Jews and Catholics. She is contemptuous and bitchy about all her friends, and not even close to her children. She lives on the edge of hysteria, forgetting what she is doing, panicking, distractedly trying to organize a meaningless life.

We see Bissy's sexual misery. For ten years she's received no sort of satisfaction from her husband; not since the time "He slapped my face and said 'Stop directing'." Now she passively does what he liked. But feels nothing. Her thoughts are

consumed with sexual obsessions and longings. She tearfully remembers the details of the time she enjoyed sex with a man – the first time she made love, 20 years ago now.

Her husband is completely insensitive, impatient, bad-tempered, sexually demanding and totally unable to communicate with his wife or relate to her needs. His life controls hers. He humiliates his children.

Bissy's final collapse into complete raging hysteria is triggered off by her anxiety over seven missing silver butter knives which she thinks the servants have lost in the garbage disposal unit. Alone in her suffering, she screams and yells abuse at everybody and everything except the causes of her suffering – her husband and the "legacy" of false class-ridden values.

Bissy's plight is grippingly tragic. But the film ends without hope, without any sort of positive feeling or opening out to the future. Bissy does not want to survive. Presumably white middle class American women will get the message – "Escape from such passive burial in life!" Money does not buy happiness! But I'm not sure how many women can identify with Bissy's affluent misery or her obsession with possessions. (Perhaps the film did frighten some of the Oxford Street tourists who wandered into the cinema looking for entertainment. Some



# BACK COPIES

## This month's bargain pack

Each month we are going to offer a specially selected package of back copies, each of which is particularly relevant to the current issue.

This month *Spare Rib* carries articles on menstruation and post-partum depression. In the bargain pack you will find:

- 12/June 73 "Why should a condition which manifests itself in physical terms have come to be regarded as psychogenic in origin?" Your doctor is taught that the basis of pain is largely neurotic, and 'female complaints' have their own medical mythology. Geoff Watts shows up the absurdities of the myths surrounding period pains and nausea in pregnancy.

16/Oct 73 Angela Briggs describes the development from embryo to foetus to help demystify abortion.

19/Dec 73 "Childhood games of 'doctors' where the little boy tells the little girl to 'Lie down and take your clothes off' so he can examine her." Angela Briggs shows how little has changed now we are adult, turns the tables and looks at gynaecologists and the politics of gynaecology.
- 24/June 74 Carol Morrell compares current theories on pre-menstrual tension, who gets it, how, why, and what's being done about it.

26/Aug 74 Barbara Jacobs explains why doctors don't listen to their patients and the predicament facing her, and all women doctors, of neither being accepted by male doctors nor by nurses.

33/March 75 Sue O'Sullivan describes the available methods of sterilisation for women, the confrontations women can expect from the medical profession and gives five women's experiences of this operation.

39/Sept 75 Coming off drugs and alcohol: a member of Essex Road Health Group describes her mother's fight to free herself from barbiturates and Guinness.

We will send you these seven issues for £2.00, which is a saving of more than 20% on the normal back copy price. Or we will send individual copies for 35p each. Other back copies available are 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45: at 35p each.

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Every back copy ordered helps pay the printer's bill.

walked out.) Certainly we can identify with Bissy's empty life and her sexual oppression and personal isolation. The film shows the need for escape, but gives no hint of the route. When interviewed by *Spare Rib*, Karen Arthur, the director, said "At any time she [Bissy] could have had the strength to say No." Karen believes its just up to each individual woman to overcome her situation and find her own solution, through

some individual choice. And that's a load of rubbish. We can't suddenly transcend our social reality. The idea of individual liberation is a blind alley, social movements like the women's movement and the ideas which grow with them are what change people. The film is definitely worth seeing. It's brilliantly acted by Joan Hotchkiss who wrote the script based on her own early life. Lyn Segal:

## MUSIC



Bonnie Raitt

BONNIE RAITT  
'Home Plate'  
(Warners)  
MARIA MULDAUR  
'Sweet Harmony'  
(Warners)  
KATE AND ANNA  
McGARRIGLE  
(Warners)

Alliances have grown between several of America's women musicians and are particularly evident on these three albums. Bonnie Raitt's *Home Plate* has Emmylou Harris on backing vocals and musicians who've worked with Maria Muldaur and Linda Ronstadt. Maria Muldaur's *Sweet Harmony* includes Kate McGarrigle's 'Lying Song' and two numbers plus vocal back-up from Wendy Waldman. Kate and Anna McGarrigle's debut album is co-produced by Joe Boyd - who also co-produced Muldaur's LP. Linda Ronstadt, who has also used Anna McGarrigle's songs, says, "It's like an information co-op, we give each other a lot of help and have all picked one another out of the dumps at times. Fortunately we're different enough that we don't have to compete for the same material. There's plenty of room for us all."

It's true that the main influence on each of these albums is different. The McGarrigles' emphasis is folk. Their simplicity of style and song uses the traditional ingredients of

folk music as a base from which they develop. Bonnie Raitt's roots are in black country blues. Her guitar and vocal style comes from the original blues musicians with whom she's worked, encouraged and admired. She's a convincing, no bullshit performer, who brings off old and new songs with startling skill and confidence. This, her fifth Warners LP offers ballads, blues, soul and very good listening.

Maria Muldaur's music has a country flavour with a bit of everything else thrown in. I find her less credible than Bonnie Raitt, more sugary and commercial. Both vocal and backing is technically streamlined and her varied choice of songs sustained my interest. But I felt no gut-level response, no goose pimples - all a bit unreal. These albums have more in common than the occasional musician/songwriter/studio/producer. All these women have strong, flexible voices and a love of harmony and melody. They sing the same old love themes - depicting the weak, dependent, competitive female. But their art is their interpretation and these albums will draw public attention to the increasing ranks of first class women performers.

THE SURPRISE SISTERS  
(RCA)

RCA seems to sign up more female vocal groups than any other company (Rock Bottom,



Sweet Rain, The Ladybirds, Feminine Touch, etc.). This time it's The Surprise Sisters from Blackburn, Lancashire and, we're assured, "They really *are* sisters . . . and there's more to them than just four pretty faces." Discovered, produced and signed to Tony Visconti (producer of some Bowie LPs) and his Good Earth label. This, their debut album, is packaged 30's style - lettering, dress, make-up - and evokes the kind of reluctant admiration one has for The Pointer Sisters - that slick, soulful, artificiality that books them into the cabaret (first division) circuit. In fact, The Surprise Sisters' highly-acclaimed stint at London's Ronnie Scott's confirmed their niche - four powerful women entertainers with impeccable harmonies and dynamics and the ability to construct songs of their own. Even though one of their four original tracks has them panting for those "Downtown Boys" 'cos they "really know what it's all about", I found myself make-believing great potential if *they* took over the driving seat.

# CAROLE KING 'Thoroughbred' (A&M)

Carole King doesn't change much, neither does the tempo of her numbers, neither does her producer, neither do her lyrics, neither do some of her musicians. So her style remains as constant as her sales. (*Tapestry* has been in the American album charts for nearly five years!) She is a highly experienced musician, singer, song-

writer and arranger and can afford the best musicians. Again, she has written or co-written all the tracks, and her lyrics, concerned mainly with her emotional/sensual thoughts, seep through now and again. But it's not an album to inspire or stimulate, rather it coaxes you to escape into her smooth, dreamy world. The cover completes the picture - Carole King dreamily riding her thoroughbred on the beach at sunset - every ad-man's fantasy.

# GLORIA LYNNE 'I'm So In Love' (DJM)

Well, I've been through all the press releases, paper cuttings and biographies I've accumulated over the years, but can find nothing at all on Gloria Lynne. The sleeve notes inform us that her career began in 1950 at Harlem's Apollo Theatre. Later she spent a few years in vocal backing groups, before going solo and releasing several albums. This one is unremarkable, the compositions (dealing mainly with relationships) are not her own. We get no nearer to learning who she is, the lyrics use the funk/soul/disco language clichés, best not repeated. Very sad, because it seems there are scores of black women recording artistes in this idiom. Their gifted vocals become processed into a faceless (profitable?) mass. You might hear a track off this LP on your local pub's 'soul' night - but you won't remember it.

# JANIS IAN 'Aftertones' (CBS)

Listening to Janis Ian albums, I get the feeling that her music is her only lifeline and she's barely holding on. Her voice, plaintive and devoid of hope, echoes the pain and loneliness of a sensitive, damaged person. The way she strips herself naked with words is both pathetic and admirable. Her music grows out of a folk/blues mixture supported by simple but effective arrangements, one track here, 'Hymn', has Phoebe Snow and Odette putting in some beautiful vocals. She's played and composed since childhood and at fifteen had a hit ('Society's Child'). Later she stopped everything to concentrate on song-writing and " . . . to lose that numbness that haunts you in this business. When I could feel again, I knew I'd make it." Since her return three years ago, I suppose she has made it. Her songs have been recorded by the likes of Roberta Flack and Joan Baez and her records have won Grammy Awards. So in her weakness, she goes from strength to strength, but her overall negativity is depressing.

Marion Fudger



Janis Ian

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Diagram 1

Hormone production in a woman's body

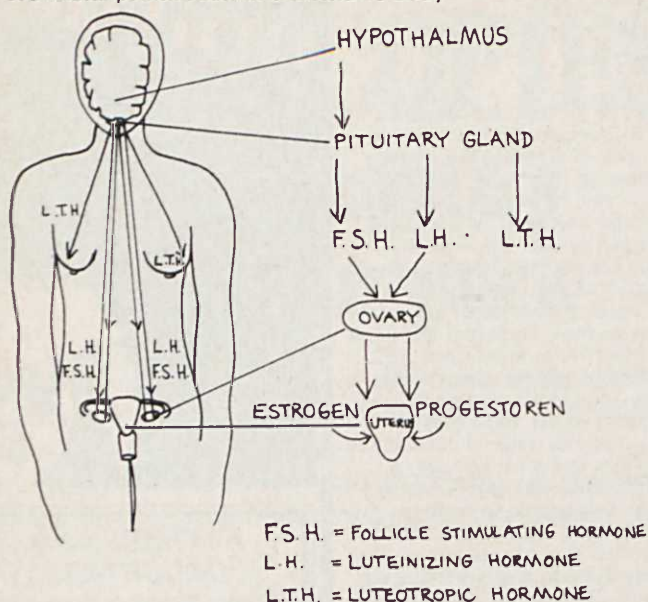
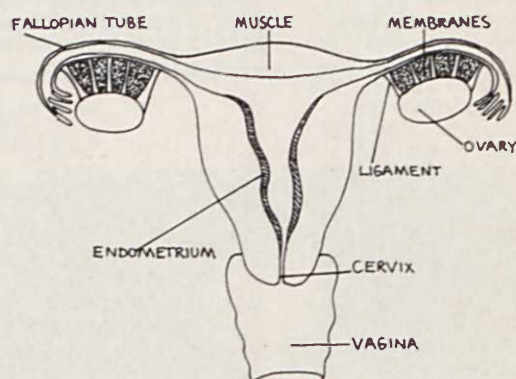


Diagram 2

Reproductive organs in a woman



To understand how our periods work we need to grasp a few facts about **hormones** – the message-takers.

The *hypothalamus* is the part of the brain which regulates the automatic nervous system. It programmes the *pituitary gland* which is the master gland. From here hormone messages are sent to the different organs of the body to carry out their various activities. The three hormones which are sent to the ovaries are:

1 **Follicle-stimulating hormone** (FSH) which stimulates the growth of a follicle within the ovary. Each ovary contains 40,000–300,000 follicles, only 300–400 of which will develop into mature eggs. One follicle develops each month as a result of FSH activity. FSH also contributes to ovulation – pushing the mature egg out of the

ovary – and the manufacture of **estrogen** in the ovary. In a sort of seesaw effect, the increased production of estrogen causes the FSH level to drop, which stimulates

2 **Luteinizing hormone** (LH). The LH contributes to ovulation and is mainly responsible for **progesterone** secretion, produced within the corpus luteum (the remains of the follicle once ovulation has taken place) see diagram 3. In the seesaw effect again, increased progesterone causes LH decline, corpus luteum degeneration and therefore overall progesterone and estrogen levels to fall off. The estrogen decline signals for FSH to rise and the cycle starts again.

3 **Luteotrophic hormone** stimulates glands in the breasts for milk production.

Estrogen and progesterone each play a different part in the

menstrual cycle in the way they affect the uterus.

Estrogen stimulates the growth and thickening of the lining of the uterus. This lining is a special kind of cell structure called the **endometrium**. The build up of the endometrium takes place mostly in the first part of the menstrual cycle before ovulation. This is called the **proliferatory phase**.

Progesterone production is increased after ovulation, and causes the uterine glands to start producing nourishing substances for a fertilised egg. It also increases the blood supply to the endometrium. This is called the **secretory phase**.

The corpus luteum keeps up hormone production for about 12 days after ovulation. If no fertilised egg implants itself in the uterus during this time, the

production of hormones drops and the lining of the uterus, which cannot be maintained without them, begins to break down. The blood vessels close off supply to the thickened cell layer and it is shed, bit by bit, in clots. Your period starts.

The blood supply to the bottom layer of the endometrium is not affected by those changes, and it is here that the build-up of a new lining starts, even as the old one is being shed. **Fibriolysin**, a substance secreted by the uterus, normally breaks down large clots. Sometimes if bleeding is heavy or fast there is not enough time for fibriolysin to operate and large clots appear in the discharge.

The uterus at this time becomes tense, it contracts. The neck of the uterus, the cervix, dilates. Both actions help push the discharge out into the vagina.

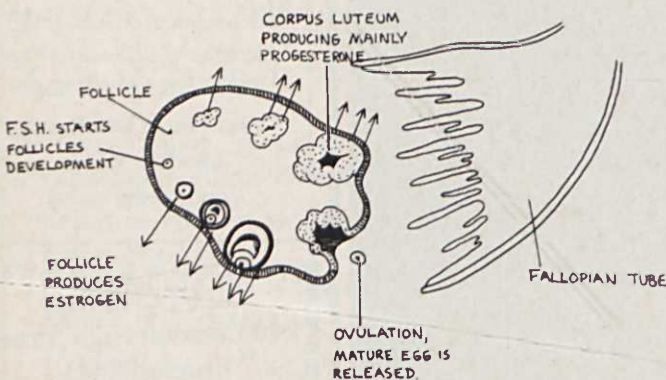
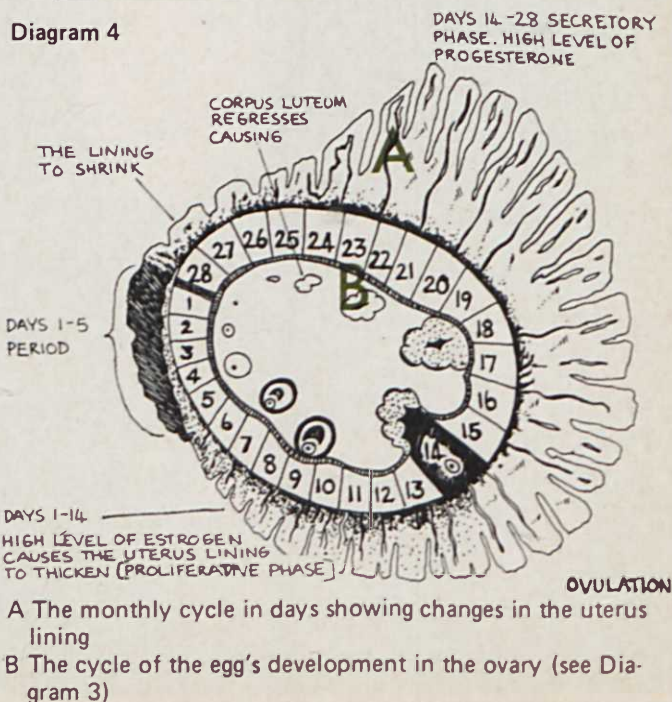


Diagram 3

The egg's development in the ovary

Diagram 4





# PERIODS

**Periods** start at any age between nine and 18 and continue through to the menopause somewhere between 40 and 50, or even later. The average age for starting periods is gradually becoming lower, and in this country tends to be around 12. Diet is one of the reasons for this — good food encourages quicker growth and earlier maturity. Another contributing factor may be better control of childhood infectious illnesses.

Many women just starting to have periods will have an irregular cycle. A period may happen one month and then not re-appear for several months. This is very common and there is usually no need to see a doctor. A lot of girls who do consult a doctor are put unnecessarily on the contraceptive pill as a way of regulating their periods. Many are also put on it to stop them having heavy blood loss. Since most women take the pill for years and years later in life, and since its long term effects are not known, it's worth thinking twice before taking it for those reasons, convenient though it may seem.

A 'regular' cycle may vary in length from woman to woman. The average is 28 days but cycles of from three to six weeks are also quite normal. The number of days periods last varies too, within the range of three to eight days, and so does the amount of discharge, even within your own 'normal' cycle. The average quantity of blood lost is 37ml. (two tablespoons). Over 80ml. is considered medically heavy.

No woman has an absolutely regular cycle throughout her life. Chemical changes in her body, and the amount of stress in her life may cause small changes from month to month. Although a little blood is sometimes passed at ovulation time, blood loss at any other time between periods is abnormal and worth seeing a doctor about.

Of course periods have far wider implications than this bare medical description. Periods are still things most of us are vaguely ashamed of and secretive about, looking anxiously for stains on sheets or clothes, peering down the toilet to make sure the tampon has flushed away, and concealing soiled sanitary towels and knickers even from our nearest and dearest. For centuries menstruating women of all cultures have been treated in special, generally negative ways. They have been thought of as unclean, forced to hide away; magical qualities have been ascribed to them. These ideas largely originate in male-dominated cultures and obviously result from men being mystified and often horrified by the way women bleed every month. This history affects how we experience our periods. It makes it hard to tell how much our tension and pain is the result of physical processes and how much it's bred by the attitudes of society. There are a lot of things that can go wrong with us and our periods, and because the menstrual cycle is complicated, it's often difficult to find causes for the symptoms we have. Medical research into hormones is still in its early stages.

Gillian Lacey of Essex Road Women's Health Group answers some commonly asked questions about periods.

## *Why do some women's periods fail to start?*

If a woman has never had a period, this is called **primary amenorrhea**. It can be caused by the absence or underdevelopment of the female reproductive organs. This might mean that the hormonal changes at puberty which normally set ovulation going have not taken place. It could be because the reproductive organs are malformed. Or because of a hormone imbalance. Hormone therapy can be effective in this case. In some women the hymen, which covers the opening to the vagina, is not sufficiently perforated to let the discharge out. In this case minor surgery can remove the hymen and solve the problem. But such cases are rare. It's also possible for shock or illness to delay the onset of periods.

## *What makes periods suddenly stop?*

This is called **secondary amenorrhea**. If you are pregnant your periods stop, also if you are breastfeeding your baby. It's normal after the menopause and during the months and years leading up to it. Climate, fear, shock, tension, depression and travelling can all cause temporary amenorrhea. So can drug-taking, poor general health and illness — anorexia, for example. Change of situation can also bring it about — starting training for a new job, for instance.

It may be a symptom of a disease of the reproductive organs, although usually there will be other symptoms. If you have not had a period for three months consult a doctor (unless you have recently come off the pill).

## *Why don't periods always start immediately when you come off the pill?*

This seems to be the most common cause of amenorrhea. The pill inhibits ovulation by maintaining high levels of estrogen and progesterone. When you stop taking it your body is often slow to re-adjust its hormone balance. It can take as long as a year for the menstrual cycle to become regular and normal again. But remember that this does not mean you are not fertile — roughly 50% of women do have periods and become pregnant within three months. So there is a danger in relying on this lack of periods and infertility and being lax with contraceptive methods.



## PERHATIAN

a. TIDAK DIPERKENANKAN MASUK JIKALAU  
TIDAK BERPAKAIAN ADAT ATAU MEMAKAI  
SELENDANG.

6. TIDAK DIPERKENANKAN MASUK JIKALAU  
SEDANG DATANG BULAN.

IT'S PROHIBITED TO ENTER WITHOUT  
DECENT DRESS AND FOR WOMEN  
DURING MENSTRUATION. THANK YOU.

from a sign at the entrance to the Holy Springs Temple, Bali, Indonesia, submitted by Sybilla Green Dorros, Manila, Philippines

### *Is there anything you can do about it?*

If, three months after coming off the pill, you still haven't had a period, see a doctor for a check. Drugs can be given to stimulate ovulation. Even before the use of the pill, 7–10% of couples found it difficult to have children. Some women, therefore, who have no period after taking the pill may be in this group. They may have been taking the pill almost unnecessarily since their ovulation/period pattern was irregular or absent beforehand.

### *Why do you get greasy hair and spots just before a period?*

This is definitely linked to the high level of progesterone in the body during the 12 or so days before your period starts. The greasiness often spreads from the hair to the face, causing pimples, so keeping your hair washed and clean can help avoid the problem. Avoiding fatty or greasy food at this time may help too.

### *Is it true that during a period your resistance is lowered and you're more prone to infection?*

This is so. For instance, cold sores will often break out at this time. But the exact reasons for this are not yet fully understood.

### *Why does your temperature go up?*

This occurs with the production of progesterone.

### *Are big clots in the discharge anything to worry about?*

Most people get clots, particularly in the first two days. A useful guide is that persistent clots larger than a grape should be reported to a doctor.

### *What is the normal colour of the discharge?*

Newly discharged blood is red. Blood which has been in the uterus for some time and comes out towards the end of a period tends to be brownish.

### *Is it all right to make love when you have a period?*

Many women feel unsure about making love at this time, particularly if they're sleeping with a man/woman they don't know well or can't talk to very easily about sexual things. Other reasons may be – painful periods, it's too messy/smelly, it might put the man off. Some women enjoy intercourse especially towards the end of the period. In fact, it's not particularly bad for you, but during menstruation the normal vaginal lubricant is mixed with blood – not itself a very good lubricant. This means that the vagina, since it is drier, may feel less sensitive and is slightly more prone to infection through friction. It may become irritated or inflamed. The diaphragm can be used by those who dislike the mess. It collects up the blood before it gets into the vagina. A lot of the embarrassment gradually goes if you are able to talk about it with the person you're sleeping with.

### *What do men feel about making love during a woman's period?*

Some men definitely dislike the idea. The idea of blood suddenly coming out seems enough to drive away all desire (whether through sympathy or squeamishness and distaste, I don't know). A few men also assume you can't or shouldn't do it. Others don't mind at all, although it seems common for people not to like the idea of oral sex because of the taste and smell. Then of course there's the man who ignores all the woman's excuses, pulls out the tampon and carries on regardless!

### *Why do you get period pains and what can be done about them?*

The name given to painful periods is dysmenorrhea. There are two recognised types, **spasmodic** and **congestive**, though it is often difficult for either you or the doctor to work out which you have. With their periods, many women get faintness, sickness, back-ache, stomach-ache, sore breasts and a feeling of being bloated. The number or combination of these symptoms varies from person to person, and from period to period. The causes of dysmenorrhea are not completely understood but more and more people think it is due to an imbalance of estrogen, progesterone, and other chemicals known as **prostaglandins**. Spasmodic dysmenorrhea is mainly pains in the abdomen, sometimes spreading down the genital area and thighs to the lower back. It usually starts at the same time as your period and gradually slackens off in the next couple of days. The cramping is thought to come from the changes taking place in the uterus – the closing off of blood vessels, and the discharge passing through the cervix as a result of the lining being shed. Some women also feel faint and sick. Spasmodic dysmenorrhea often disappears after pregnancy.

The symptoms of congestive dysmenorrhea usually occur before the period starts and include dull aching in the lower abdomen, and bloatedness due to fluid retention. This swollen feeling may extend to the breasts and even ankles and wrists. Other symptoms are headache, back-ache, nausea, constipation and/or diarrhoea, pains in the joints and feelings of tiredness, tension and depression. A few or all of these symptoms may appear up to a week before your period starts, and usually go on until the first or second day. This type of dysmenorrhea may come and go throughout your life and doesn't seem to be affected by pregnancy. It's not clear why water is retained in the body pre-menstrually. A salt-free diet and mild diuretics will help to relieve it, and may also relieve some of the other symptoms. Dr. Katherina Dalton puts forward the theory that spasmodic dysmenorrhea is the result of too much progesterone



secretion, and congestive dysmenorrhea the result of too much estrogen in relation to the amount of progesterone. Proper dosage of the appropriate hormone would relieve most of the symptoms. However, accurate diagnosis is essential for carrying out this treatment, or else the symptoms would be increased. Also, too much of the right therapy would create symptoms of the opposite condition! Dr. Dalton distinguishes between natural progesterone effective for replacement therapy and the synthetic progestogens which are more convenient, readily available, and which can be taken by mouth, but which often aggravate the symptoms rather than correcting them. On the whole, diagnosis is difficult to obtain and the treatment is costly to the N.H.S.

There are several herbal remedies which may be useful — see *Spare Rib* 34, 'Self-Help Herbs'. A useful new paperback which tells you which herbs to use as diuretics, and for pains, is *Grandmother's Secrets* by Jean Palaiseul (Penguin).

### *Can exercises help period pains?*

One of the theories behind doing exercises is that much period pain is caused by muscular tension. To curl up and lie still is thought to increase the cramp by tensing muscles even more. Often if you can overcome the desire to lie down when the pain is really bad, and do relaxation exercises instead, the pain is eased. But at other times it seems easier to resort to a pain-killer. For spasmodic pain a doctor may be able to prescribe an anti-spasmodic muscle relaxant. Sometimes periods can be more painful because you don't exercise enough anyway, and your muscles are weak and flabby. Exercise is important at all times as 'preventive medicine'. Yoga-based exercises are usually the best ones for period pains.

### *What can be done about pre-menstrual tension?*

Pre-menstrual tension is often considered one of the congestive dysmenorrhea symptoms. It is more common in women in their late 20s and 30s than in younger age groups (see *Spare Rib* 24). This tension is still thought to be connected with hormone imbalance but, since it is 'of the mind' it raises more questions about the way society conditions us to see our periods than do the more obviously physical discomforts. It's helpful if family or friends can be told about the likelihood of women suffering in this way, so that they can be more supportive. Boys and men will otherwise have no way of learning about the pre-menstrual syndrome since it's an experience they will never have themselves. Another good idea is to keep a chart for a few months to monitor the pattern of your own pre-menstrual tensions. Although most doctors now accept that there is a physiological basis for pre-menstrual tension — until recently they put it down to general female neuroses — research has not progressed far. A Sydney women's group has tried treatments of large doses of calcium and vitamin D ten days before a period is due, but the medical profession feels that the experiment wasn't done well enough to be conclusive.

### *Why does the coil make your periods heavier?*

One of the reasons for this seems to be the increase caused by the presence of the coil, in prostaglandin secretion. Substances which inhibit this can be prescribed by a doctor. There is less blood loss with the new smaller IUDs like the 'Copper 7' than with the larger types like the Lippes Loop. Excessive blood loss can cause anaemia. Your diet should include plenty of meat, egg-yolk, liver, kidney and lentils for extra iron. □

### *Confessin the (Menstrual) Blues*

*Got the blues this Friday mornin  
Was blue as blue could be  
An it wasn't love or money  
No, they call it P.M.T.*

*Menstruation . . . yeah I got them Premenstrual Blues  
My nerves is like a tightrope and my feet don't seem  
to fit my shoes.*

*Well I went to see my doctor  
An I asked her what to do  
She says, honey that aint nothing  
Why I get it worse than you.*

*Oh yes child, there's some sisters get it bad  
If all you got is nerves, well honey you should be glad.*

*When I finally started bleeding  
I was in my baby's bed  
Lord he looked at me so funny  
When he found his sheet was red.*

*I says Honey, why, you look like it was news  
He'd got them unclean touch-me-not blood-on-the-  
bedsheet blues.*

*Now a man he have the smegma  
Lord, his armpits never clean  
His asshole brown and funky  
Girls, you all know what I mean  
But all night he'll keep you waiting  
If he catch you menstruating  
Aint no chance of fornicating —  
Just you watch his face turn green.*

*No sisters, why, he'd rather pull his pud  
Yeah, he's scared to touch his woman, says that blood  
won't do him no good.*

*Lord, I love that blood on Monday  
Cause it says I aint with child  
But from Tuesday up to Sunday  
Its enough to drive you wild.*

*Oh Lordy, got a body I cant use  
Got those am-I-sticky an I've-run-out-of-Tampax blues.*

*Now it aint no degradation  
To have the menstruation  
Aint no humiliation  
To bleed from time to time  
But we could not mention bleedin  
While my Poppa was a-feedin  
No, not even when he's readin  
Why you'd think it was a crime*

*Yes Daddy, why d'you have to be so mean?  
Why, I'm just a normal woman, I aint doin anything  
unclean.*

*Stephanie Smolenski*



# Info...Odds & Sods...Advice

## Vibrators

Re your article in SR44 on orgasms, can you please give me information where I can obtain a vibrator as mentioned - if possible a non-battery operated one.

I have a phallic shaped one as advertised in your mag - but find the cost of batteries rather high - have had no success with manual stimulation - perhaps I'm in too much of a hurry. But at 41 and after 20 years of marriage, time seems to be passing. I only needed 40 minutes to achieve my first orgasm, which must mean something.

Any addresses for other vibrators would be greatly appreciated.

Shirley,  
Bath

★Eleanor Stephens replies: There are several models in the shops (Boots, etc) sold as massager; any kind with a small round disc head works fine. Then your only worry is if there's a power failure.

By the way 40 minutes seems to be the "time" that many women mention; it often decreases with practice.

## Rural Community

We, six adults and two children, are looking for more people to join a one-year-old community on a smallholding in Wales. We are based on the ideas of the utopian novel *Walden Two*, and the practice of Twin Oaks, one of the several successful communities of this type in the USA. Important parts of the community are income sharing, communal childcare, egalitarian sharing of all work, using a labour credit system, taking of responsibility in the community by having managers, running a wholefood shop, and working on the smallholding.

We would like to develop other projects as ideas and numbers of people flourish. If you are interested in finding out more about us, we have newsletters available. Please send a large sae to Crabapple Community, 16 St Mary's St., Shrewsbury.

## Breast Cancer Research

I discovered I was being set up to be used in an experiment in the breast clinic of a large teaching hospital in London. I gave testimony of my experience at the Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels, Belgium, March 4-8 1976. I would like to talk with other women who would be interested in discussing further action to expose the research practices of this clinic. Could women taking action on medical crimes please get in touch with me?

In Sisterhood  
Ruth Todasco  
20 Hanover Terrace Mews,  
London NW1

## Home Confinements

There is so much difficulty in this area in organising a home confinement that a group of us got together to discuss what could be done. We decided that all we wanted was a peaceful and friendly environment to bring a child into the world. The NHS does not offer this in this area. The choice is hospital or if you struggle long enough, an unwilling and unsympathetic midwife may deliver at home.

There must be somewhere midwives who are interested in and want to practice other methods than NHS favourites, Pethedrine and Induction. For example, Leboyer, NCT Psychoprophylaxis. We want to contact any such midwives, with the intention of providing an alternative to the present system of confinement in Dyfed. Are there any midwives who might be prepared to come here for a few weeks if enough births were imminent to make it worth while? We believe there are enough people in a small enough area to occupy a full-time midwife.

Gary Martin  
Ffnnongarreg, Llansadwrn, Llanwrda,  
Dyfed SA19 8HG

## Kingsway-Princeton Nursery

The college nursery was originally opened on a part-time basis, several weeks into the September term, and for various reasons we did not manage to attract enough kids, and have been struggling ever since.

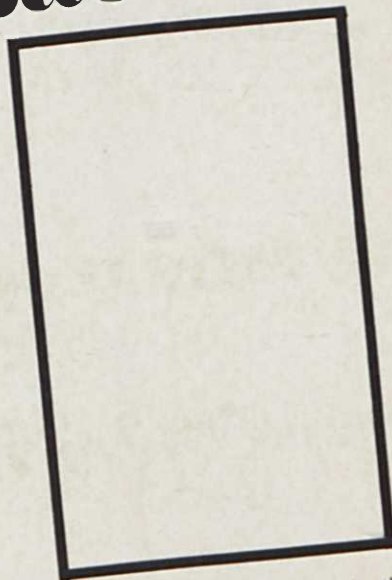
We re-opened in January and opened our doors to the outside community, offering to consider any kids from 2-5 years. We can take up to ten kids of this age group, but we are still only about half-full. As we receive no money at all from the ILEA or from our students union, we have to rely on fund-raising activities, small amounts from charities and the income from nursery fees. As we have so few kids our income is very low, and nowhere near covers our workers' pay. So we may have to close at the end of this month and continue the struggle to establish ourselves in September this year.

Anyone who is interested in using the nursery, helping out, or making suggestions as to where we might get some financial help, please contact me on 01-837 8185 ext 31. (We charge £6 a week per kid).

Yours in desperation

Caroline Aperguis (Student Services Officer)  
NB Kingsway-Princeton College is a college of Further Education. The nursery is on the site in Princeton Street, London WC1.

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